CHICAGO LEDGER

VOL. XLIX. NO. 1 CHICAGO, ILL., SATURDAY, JANUARY 1, 1921. 5 CENTS A COPY.

Do You Like Short Stories That Lie Outside the Beaten Path of Fiction?

Then this issue was specially built for you.

It contains four odd pieces of fiction:

"The Man With the Odd Skull," "R. S. V. P.," "Collaboration" and "The Eugenic Innocents."

Each complete in itself.

A HAPPY NEW YEAR!

CHICAGO LEDGER

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Over the Rim of the World

AS YOU open this copy of your Ledger, you will be interested in knowing that its publisher, Mr. W. D. Boyce, and his party, are on the broad, blue Pacific Ocean, bound on one of the most picturesque tours of exploration yet undertaken by this enthusiastic searcher for the wild and strange places of the earth.

First arriving at Auckland, New Zealand, on or about January 3rd, and almost a full month after leaving Chicago, Mr. Boyce will begin the taking of photographs and the collection of interesting news-stories about the unusual life of this part of the world, known to American seamen as "West by Southwest." From New Zealand the party will then proceed to Australia, taking in not only the latter continent's internationally famous cities, such as Melbourne and Sydney, but exploring spots in its interior which are little known.

Where necessary the airplane will be used to cover distances overland; the camera and the motion picture machine will both vie with each other in the recording of the interesting scenes.

After leaving Australia will come what we might call the cream of the tour—an island-to-island exploration of the famous South Sea Islands—said to be part of a submerged continent, and harboring the scattered groups of a race known as the Polynesians. Again science will lend its accomplishments to the tour, for this tropical region, dotted with mountain peaks protruding from the ocean, and palm-studded islands peopled with strange-hued men and beasts, will be covered in a swift-sailing, oil-burning yacht.

Now all the facts and photographs and interesting things of Mr. Boyce's tour are going to be reproduced and described in the Ledger's companion paper, The Saturday Blade, and if you are not already a reader of the Blade, this is your chance almost to take a trip yourself.

But lest you think that the Ledger is going to be quite left out of this new sensation, let us remind you that already we are contracting with the best writers on the other side of the earth to furnish us with fiction stories laid in these picturesque lands; and these stories will run in addition to your other serials and tales. A good story always conveys a picture of the place and people about which it turns, and still better entertains its readers with a bit of drama laid on the stage of the reader's own imagination. Just as Mr. Boyce will show us in the Blade the ways in which these other spots of the earth differ from our own land, the Ledger will prove that the people there have joys, sorrows and surprises, and take part in tragedies and comedies; and that the human heart beats the same from pole to pole and clear around the equator.

A Special New Year's Talk

By the Editor

IF YOU will look at the group of Roman numerals on the left upper corner of the Ledger cover this week, you will notice that they read "XLIX," which in simple figures read "49." This means that the Ledger now begins its forty-ninth year of existence which is mighty, mighty close to a half century.

Think of it! The magazine which is now in your hands started its half century ago, and has been published continuously ever since. Is not this a record to be proud of, a publishing achievement in this era when magazines which exist five years think they are doing very well?

How many of us have any remembrance of what was taking place back in that memorable year when the Ledger first started its existence? How many of us, indeed, have attained even enough years to be able to have such a remembrance?

1873! The Civil War still fresh in the minds of the North and South, Lee having surrendered to Grant at Appotomax courthouse but eight years before. And only two years before this date, Chicago burned to the ground in the greatest conflagration on record. Grant in the presidential chair, in his second administration, the South—especially Louisiana—still honeycombed with the carpet-baggers. A miniature civil war going on in the city of Little Rock, Arkansaw. Preparations being made to celebrate the hundredth year of our independence by a great exposition at Philadelphia in 1876. Gold being discovered among the Black Hills, which belonged to the Sioux Indians, and the rush of whites onto this territory between Wyoming and the present State of South Dakota causing the slaughter of thousands of Buffalo, the only food the Indians had. Custer's Massacre about to take place with the next onward progression of the calendar.

Does not this give us an idea far better than mere figures, of the age of the Ledger?

Then if a magazine can live a half a century—or close upon this time—it must have an appeal that is very much an all-round appeal! And that is exactly what the Ledger has striven for during all these successful years: To print the kind of fiction that interests all folks, be they men or women, boys or girls, young or old.

Now if it has successfully held its huge army of subscribers and readers for forty-eight years, what is it going to do to hold them during its forty-ninth year?

Well, it's going to follow the highly productive policy of entertainment—just entertainment—that and nothing more; coupled, however, with novelty and convincingness, which are the two additional qualities a good story must have outside of interest. The Ledger editor knows you get plenty of the serious things of life, hard work, trials and troubles, sicknesses and sometimes even money shortages; and to this part of your life we are not going to add. Our aim will be to help you to forget the unpleasant things of life for several hours each week, and to so print and publish by our giant and modern efficient processes that the price you pay for this entertainment will be less than you will have to pay anywhere in the world. We've already contracted with the best writers in America and England to furnish this entertainment—writers who name their own prices for the golden story webs they spin, and if you will look in the issue of Jan. 15th, you will not only learn who some of these writers are, but can meet them face to face. Which is a bit more interesting than merely reading their productions, is it not?

Remember the date, Jan. 15th. We'll tell you more then of some of the good things to come.

And don't think we've forgotten the usual courtesies that this season of the year brings.

A Happy New Year to each and every individual reader and seller of the Ledger.

Hot Off the Jokesmith's Anvil

Not on the Menu.

"Here's your bill, sir. Do you wish anything else?"

Seedy Customer—Yes, you might bring some one to pay it.

Perfectly Qualified.

"Are you sure you're qualified to lead a jazz orchestra?" asked the hotel proprietor.

"Absolutely," answered the applicant with confidence. "I've had two nervous breakdowns, was shell-shocked in France and I coached at third base for three seasons."

A Gentle Hint.

Dentist (after preliminary inspection)—Extraordinary thing—there's one of your teeth only half filled.

Patient—Ah, that were t'other dentist. The duffer 'urt me, so Ah gave 'im a good lick in t' jaw.

Getting Wise.

"Guess I'd better reduce on rope," said the storekeeper at Pizen Gulch.

"Why?"

"Well, the boys are talking of hanging a few profiteers. I don't want 'em to start on me."

Quite Correct.

A lawyer tells of a policeman whose evidence was taken on commission, and who deposed as follows:

"The prisoner sat on me, calling me a boob, a fool, a bonehead, a childsnatcher, an old woman and a half-witted guy," and, this being the conclusion of his deposition, his signature was preceded by the formal ending, "All of which I swear is true."

In the Bible.

"So you attend Sunday school regularly?" the minister said to little Eve.

"Oh, yes, sir," said she.

"And you know the Bible?"

"Oh, yes, sir."

"Could you, perhaps, tell me something that is in it?"

"I could tell you everything that's in it."

"Indeed!" And the minister smiled. "Do tell me, then."

"Sister's beau's photo is in it," said little Eve promptly, "and ma's recipe for vanishin' cream is in it, and a lock of my hair cut off when I was a baby is in it, and the ticket for pa's watch is in it."

He Should Have Lingered.

"Who is the melancholy-looking gentleman done in oil?"

"That's Mrs. Gnagg's first husband," said Mr. Gnagg. "He did me an evil turn once."

"How was that?"

"He turned his face to the wall and died."

Early-day Kleptomania.

Mrs. Myles—What beautiful snuff-boxes you have in your collection of antiques!

Mrs. Styles—Yes; they were handed down from my great-grandmother.

"Then she took snuff?"

"Oh, no; only snuffboxes."

Skill Explained.

Young Wife—Your mother a fine cook? I don't believe it. I've heard that your father was a chronic dyspeptic.

Husband—Well, that's all right; mother learned by practicing on father."

Gentle Reminder.

"Hiram," said Mrs. Corntossel, "there's one thing I want to remind you of."

"What's that?"

"Get out of that rocking-chair an' come off the front porch. You're a farmer; not a politician."

Got Personal.

Mugg—It's as plain as the nose on your face.

Rugg—Well, anyhow, it isn't as plain as the face behind your nose.

Brain Teasers.

Jumbled Names of Boys.

1—1. Slvyetsre. 2. Yoerl. 3. Nhrema. 4. Wraohd. 5. Ndarelo. 6. Dlhrao. 7. Tlileo. 8. Nomilt. 9. Ovrliel. 10. Xelenarda.

Hidden Birds.

2—1. Give me a gleam of light.
2. In the ruined chapel I can see ivy growing.
3. The widow lost her purse.
4. In Berlin nettles are boiled and eaten.

Decapitations.

3—I am sharp; behead me, and I am not out. I am an illness; behead me, and I am not in. I prattle; behead me, and I am on your head. I am not fast; behead me, and I am not high.

Five-word Square.

4—1. To keep an eye upon.
2. To love to the point of worship.
3. An adjunct to a bath.
4. To crawl.
5. The plural of to aid.

ANSWERS TO LAST WEEK'S PUZZLES.

396—Charade.

Pattern (Pat-Tern).

397—Changed Consonants.

Opal, oral, oval.

398—Diagonal.

A n v i l
s P a i n
m a R i n
c a n O e
c a n o N

399—Anagram.

City.

It is not desired that readers send in the answers to the puzzles. They are printed simply as brain teasers, and the correct answers will be printed the following week.

Too Good to Be True.

Wife—John, a man called this afternoon and said he would supply us with enough electricity to light our house, do all our cooking and run the washing machine for only $1 a month. What do you think of that?

Hub—You should have told him that when we want fiction we'll get it at a book store.

Had Them.

"Do you keep motoring [illegible] asked the man in the depar[illegible]

"Oh, yes," replied the floor[illegible] a bow. "We keep arnica, [illegible] witch-hazel. Drug departm[illegible] aisle to the left, sir."

Something to Cover Up.

"Joskins say he has no use for papers. That he does not take [illegible] to bed with him."

"Then, naturally, he has no u[illegible] political sheets."

Of Course.

"Don't you think that a woma[illegible] entitled to a man's wages?" dem[illegible] the Equal Rights propagandist.

"Well," replied the professor, [illegible] would depend entirely on whethe[illegible] not the woman is married to the m[illegible]

Anything to Oblige.

"Marry you? The idea! I wouldn't marry you for $50,000."

But, my dear, I am worth a million."

"Oh, well, if you insist, I suppose I shall have to humor you."

Soft.

"I always sleep wtih my gloves on. That is what makes my hands so soft."

"Hm; I suppose you sleep with your hat on also?"

Come in Handy.

Visitor—I suppose, Eddie, that you are glad that the doctor brought you a little sister.

Eddie—Bet yer life! She can wipe the dishes now, instead of me.

THE SECRET.

To say the old things o'er again
The best plan seems to be.
To say the old things o'er again
But say them differently

Collaboration

by Alfred Hollingsworth

JABEZ SHARPLE knelt beside an old, lidless steamer trunk which he had pulled from under his hall-room bed and pawed oved the mass of manuscripts that half-filled it. For hours he had been running thru story after story until his short-sighted eyes behind their powerful lenses ached and itched with the strain and his limbs had grown numb and lifeless under him. Many of the stories were not finished, some were so interlined and corrected that even he could scarcely make them out, while others were neatly typed and bore evidence of having been the weary rounds of the magazines.

For ten years he had been writing without a single acceptance, and these were the accumulated evidence of his useless labor. "They're not worth the paper they're written on," he decided in critical self-condemnation as he cast aside the last one. "I've never been able to fool the editors, and now I can't any longer fool myself."

Dragging the trunk over to the old grate he dumped the entire contents into it and with firm resolution set fire to the mass. As he warmed his delicate, scrawny hands before the sudden blaze he grinned with wry humor. "At last I've received some benefit from my writing. The only 'literary work' that I'm capable of doing is to type H. Garton Carruthers' novels for him," he mused bitterly. Then, as the mass of papers in the grate burned down and out he arose to his feet. "There—that's done with. I'll never write another line of my own."

He struggled to keep his promise to himself. He applied himself to his work on Carruthers' latest novel; he took long walks; he read many books. For weeks and months he went slouching around in his old gray overcoat, grouchy and irritable, like a smoker who has sworn off, and all the time there was growing a story within his heart and brain, a story such as he had never attempted to tell; a story that seemed beyond his power to realize. Yet it possessed him until he lived with it night and day. Never before had he known what it was to have his characters dominate him and insist on his telling their story. They were real people to him, people who visited him day after day, and night after night, and told him their very thoughts and seemed begging him to give them birth, an existence, by putting them on paper.

He tried to fight them off, to refuse to give way to them. What was the use of writing stories that no one read? But they insisted all the stronger. "We are the children of your brain," they seemed to cry. "Why should you deny us an existence?" He knew that he would never have peace until he had written the story of "The Man Who Tried to Bribe God."

Night after night he sat up working on the story, for it was between the hours of 12 and 3 that he did his best work. The story grew under his hand and he was happy with the happiness of the creative faculty. When his work was finished he knew that it was good—but of what use was it? He had lost all hope of convincing another of the merits of his work. True, he had written it for himself alone, but now the same force that had compelled him to write the story full insisted on his publishing it.

An idea began hammering at his brain; an idea that at times had tapped there before, but now it hammered until it shaped itself into a definite resolve: this story of his should have an equal chance with the stories of H. Garton Carruthers.

He took Carruthers' latest story, The Witch's Secret, and retyped the first page, changing it slightly, and then inclosing his story, The Man Who Bribed God, and in separate envelopes, sent both of them to McLarnon's Magazine.

Two weeks later Carruthers phoned him to call and handed him a letter. "See what you can make of that. There's something queer about this," he mused, as he swished his large, stubby fingers with a check. "McLarnon's have accepted one of my stories and sent me a check for it, and yet I don't remember having written anything of that title. Can you recall having sent them a story, 'The Man Who Tried to Bribe God?'"

"I am quite sure that you never wrote any such story," truthfully declared Jabez, with beating heart, "or, at least, that you never gave it to me to copy. You—you say that such a story has been accepted—and paid for?"

"There is their letter of acceptance, the first I've had from them for some time, and here's their check—and a very generous one at that. But read the letter and then tell me what the devil it means?"

"It couldn't be a hoax?" suggested Jabez.

"Scarcely. People don't inclose fifteen-hundred-dollar checks as a hoax."

"Fifteen hundred dollars!" gasped Jabez, with trembling lips. Why, that's over thirty cents a word for five thousand words, isn't it? That is, if your story was that length."

"If the story was that length, yes."

Feeling that he had almost betrayed himself, Jabez unfolded the letter and busied himself reading it.

My Dear Carruthers:

It affords me great pleasure to welcome you back to McLarnon's.

We feel that "The Man Who Tried to Bribe God" is far and away the best thing you have ever done. It marks a new development in your style and technique, something so different that we would not have believed the story yours had not your name been on the title page.

We are inclosing a check which we trust you will find satisfactory. Continue to send us similar stories and you will always find a hearty welcome. Very truly yours,

M'LARNON'S.

JABEZ SHARPLE'S heart pounded until he could scarcely speak. He had won; his work was to be published! That was the great thing. It had been accepted by one of the best magazines in the country, and at top price. Yet he had waited and worked so long that this success left him cold. Only his heart pounded as if he would suffocate. It was rather pain that he felt instead of pleasure.

"Well, what do you make of it?" questioned Carruthers, reaching for the letter. "What are you laughing at?"

"I beg pardon, I didn't realize that I was laughing. Perhaps it struck me as queer that you should be receiving money and credit for another man's work."

"I wouldn't go so far as to say that," sneered Carruthers in venomous tones. "We authors of established reputation have to suffer many evils from those who seek to climb to fame on our shoulders. I have had my stories plagiarized and even my name manhandled and twisted into a nom de plume of Aitch Carruthers Carton by some penny-a-line scribbler, who by that means attempted to gain the attention that was denied his work. McLarnon's seem positive that I did write the story, and until I find some one who can prove ownership I shall not worry about refunding this check. If some one has attempted to play a trick on me and creep into print under my name and reputation, then I am entitled to whatever pecuniary returns there may be, am I not?" Carruthers looked shrewdly at Jabez, but then that was one of Carruthers' habits and might mean anything or nothing.

Jabez longed to blurt out the truth, but dared not. He still retained something of his original respect for Carruthers in spite of his knowledge that he was no longer the great and successful writer that he pretended to be. Thirty years ago he had written one successful book and had never been able to repeat the performance, so that for years he had been struggling along, living on his past reputation, while his work brought in smaller returns. Yet he persisted in what he was pleased to call his "God-given style," attempting to reanimate the old corpse of his first success by twisting and turning the same old theme and never varying the trite and flamboyant phrases that constituted his "style." He was written out. Jabez had recognized that fact long before Carruthers became aware of it himself.

About a week later Jabez received a fat envelope containing the rejected manuscript of "The Witch's Secret" and a rather lengthy letter from McLarnon's:

Dear Sir:

We had supposed the fashion of plagiarizing the style and plots of H. Garton Carruthers had passed away, so that it was like meeting an ancient friend when we read your story, "The Witch's Secret."

We admit that it is a wonderfully clever attempt; but, as H. Garton has recently seen fit to abandon his old style for something far superior, it would be useless labor for you to pick up his discarded style.

We are looking for original work, not the imitation of another man's mannerisms. Very truly yours,

M'LARNON'S

"Which merely proves that H. Garton Carruthers' work with my name on it is not equal to my work with his name on it," chuckled Jabez.

"THE Man Who Tried to Bribe God" made a sensation. It was syndicated and published broadcast. It was acclaimed as a marvelous instance of the development of a new style and power in an author who had long been considered as having seen his best day—of being "written out;" yet here he had suddenly surpassed his first big success of thirty years ago!

No one was more surprised than H. Garton himself, but he concealed his surprise, accepted the situation and never disclaimed the authorship of "The Man."

He was flooded with requests for more work along similar lines. He submitted his usual style and had it uniformly turned down. The editors demanded the fresh and gripping style of "his new technique," until in desperation Carruthers attempted to write in that style and thereby deeply offended several editors, who felt that he had offered them

(Concluded on Page 18.)

The Eugenic Innocents

By Faith Holmes Heyers.

A BEAUTIFULLY equipped yacht steamed away from the shores of a lonely island in the tropical seas. On the yellow sands two children, hand in hand, stood gazing after the flying vessel that skimmed the waters like a giant swan. They were perfect specimens of childhood—a boy of five, brown-eyed, straight-limbed, alert, and a girl of four, dimpled, curly-headed, joyous. Dressed in red jersey of exactly the same cut, they yet expressed the essential differences of the embryo masculine and feminine young.

The little girl with a sudden movement threw her arms around the boy and hugged him tightly. He accepted the demonstration without offering to return it and gently shook himself free. The golden-haired baby ran to the edge of the water and threw a kiss after the disappearing yacht:

"Good-bye, Mr. Crossmans, I am glad you are goned away." When she turned again to her companion he had already started on an investigation of the island. As fast as her little fat legs could carry her she ran after him, calling:

"Take me with you, Peter Pan, I want to see, too."

"All right, Peggy, come along. Let's find out what kind of place we are going to live in. There's some funny trees—maybe we can find some fruit."

While the children were making discoveries on their deserted island home, a violent discussion was taking place on the speeding yacht.

"It is cruel, it is monstrous," said a tall raw-boned man whose short-sighted eyes were protected by thick glasses. He emphasized his remarks by slamming his fist on the pine table which stood between him and a red-faced, bull-necked individual who returned his stare, sneeringly.

"Cut out your sentimental rubbish," replied the other. "We have gone over the whole thing and counted the cost. We know the experiment is dangerous, but remember what there is in it for us if we succeed—a living for fifteen years and riches when we produce the perfect specimen of unspoiled humanity."

"Yes, yes," answered the first speaker, "and we must consider the need of the race for improvement. We shall be hailed as the saviors of the world if all goes well."

"Forget your 'ifs'," interrupted the red-faced man. "Haven't those kids been in training for this since they were 6 months old? They can lift ten-pound weights and walk five miles without knowing it. They are hardened to cold, heat, wind and exposure. Perfect specimens, to thrown on their own resources and develop their individuality. Let them grow up untrammeled by the world's conventions (your own words, Professor Mooner), and see what a race they will breed."

"Yes, it is a worthy end we are striving for," was the pious answer, "and the risk must be taken. But I shall insist on the frequent visit from an airplane and the supply of provisions if necessary."

"Certainly, that is part of the plan and it shall be your duty to take copious notes of the development of our interesting specimens."

The yacht reached its goal just as the babes finished a meal of berries and dropped down under the trees for a blissful nap. While they slept, a wild goat who had recently lost her kid, came thru the woods searching for a means to relieve her aching udders. She stopped at sight of the queer little figures in red. She thrust an inquiring nose against the soft arm of the baby girl and approved of the satin skin. Carefully stepping close to the pink face, the wild mother offered her gift to the lost baby and by some miracle of half-remembered dreams the child accepted the gift—the rosy lips pouted and drew in the warm, sweet current. The foster mother breathed a great sigh of relief and transferred all her fiercely protecting love to her adopted child.

The boy, waking first, saw nothing remarkable in the new arrangement and accepted the goat as a welcome companion. Peggy awoke, warm and happy, and the strange little trio played about the island till nightfall. The mother goat proved to be a useful friend, leading the children to the best water-holes and the finest wild fruits, and protecting them from the too near approach of other curious goats. When the stars came out the children followed the goat into a half cave, and with arms entwined and curly heads together they crept close to their new friend and slept warm and snug.

THE next day Peter Pan found new possibilities of food on the island. When the tide ebbed he ran along the wet sands and, stooping to examine the rocks, discovered myriads of mussels. He called Peggy and they thought it great sport to pry off the strange little creatures. But their appetites were not appeased by the new food and if it had not been for the goat little Peggy would have fared ill. That evening the children noticed a huge bird-like object hovering over the island and at daylight they found a great basket of provisions which they welcomed heartily.

For a boy of 5, Peter Pan was re-

He Seized a Huge Stick and Faced the Men.

markably resourceful and he taught his companion many ingenious tricks and sports. They bathed in the surf and slept in the sands—they climbed trees and shook down nuts and unknown fruits; they leaped and danced and sang with a wild free beauty that would have rejoiced the heart of a physical culturist.

Weeks, months, years flew by. Childhood merged into youth. One bright morning the two young people stood on the hilltop gazing out over the silent waters. Their beautiful, bronzed bodies, slim and erect, glistened in the sun like satin. They had acquired the habit of searching the seas for signs of life, tho they never glimpsed anything but flocks of birds in their yearly migrations. They talked but little—words had been lost with disuse—but they often sang in a weird sweet fashion that revealed their moods of joy or loneliness. Suddenly the song of this sunny morning ceased abruptly, and Peter pointed with long forefinger toward the horizon. Peggy looked and turned to him with terror in her eyes. Then they clasped hands and ran, fleet as deers, down the hillside to the shelter of the woods, where they hid while a passenger vessel passed close to the island. The little outcasts feared the unknown civilization more than all the terrors of the wilds!

There came a day when the girl looked at the boy with shy wonder and he returned her gaze with a new dignity of bearing and assumption of manliness. Now the boy went on his hunting expeditions alone and the girl sat by the waves and dreamed idle questionings. Finally her questions were answered by a tiny wailing cry that struck strangely on the ears of the lonely pair. A miracle had brought another bit of humanity to share their solitude. The tiny live thing was christened "Little Man" and he grew and thrived as other wild things thrive under a protecting mother love.

When the baby was about 6 months old the girl-mother called her man's attention to his son who lay staring at the sun. She rubbed her eyes and blinked and pointed to the baby. But the father only laughed at her fears and said, "Too little to see."

THE bird-like object was often seen hovering over the island these days and the boy and girl watched it curiously. One day it swooped close to the ground and stopped. Two men alighted, one tall and grim, the other short and red-faced. The island pair stood in front of their cave, staring stupidly.

The spectacled man advanced and cleared his throat:

"Ah, my children, you remember your guardians, do you not?"

"Uh-uh," grunted Boy, returning the stare of the other with a look of hatred.

"We have come to see your baby," said the short man in a businesslike manner.

Girl tossed her wild hair contemptuously but Boy went into the cave and came out holding fat complacent Little-man. The two visitors advanced eagerly but the Boy waved them back. He placed the baby in its mother's arms and motioned to the two men. With a sudden movement he clapped his hands in front of the child's face and close to its ears. Little-man continued to stare, unblinkingly, at the sun.

"Little-man no see, no hear," explained Boy.

"What?" yelled the two men with one voice. "Blind? Deaf?"

The father nodded and pushed the mother and child back into the cave. He seized a huge stick that lay beside the entrance of the cave and faced the men with a menacing attitude. Drawing himself up to his full height he pointed majestically to the airship. Silently, fearsomely, with many a backward glance, the tall man and the short, crept toward their airship and when they looked back from a safe height the little trio had disappeared in the shelter of the woods.

* * *

An Effective Compromise.

HECK—You say you never have any domestic squabbles; how do you avoid them?

Peck—Well, you see, immediately after we were married my wife and I came to an understanding. She said: "Now, Henry, we must neither of us be selfish and always trying to run things. We must make mutual concessions. I propose that when we agree on any matter you are to have your own way, and when we disagree I am to have my way. Then we shall get along nicely. And we have.

* * *

His Grace, the Duke.

THE Duke of Blankshire was paying his annual visit to his tenants and as he was approaching the front door of one house the mother inside said to her little daughter, "Now, Jennie, if the Duke speaks to you, be sure and say 'Your Grace'."

The child remembered her mother's coaching and when the kindly old gentleman asked her name, she promptly recited, "For what we are about to receive, may the Lord make us truly thankful."

The Last Installment of

Off Half Moon Reefs

By George Ethelbert Walsh

Last Week's Developments

During a storm Ben Ames came on deck in a drunken condition, and was forced below by the Captain. Roger was ordered to take the wheel as temporary first mate. Later Roger knocked Ames down for refusing to carry out his orders when the storm increased its fury. Chic Doby, also ordered to "lend a hand," refused to obey, but was forced to yield when Roger pulled a revolver and threatened to shoot—and shoot to kill. It was Roger Newcomb Mason who was now giving various commands to the crew—"re-born, a child of the storm and sea!"

BEN AMES, reduced to second mate, agreed to fight Roger for his former berth aboardship, now held by our hero. A fair stand-up fist battle ensued in which Ben was knocked out. "He's in love with Jane and she with him," was Roger's surmise as the girl hurried to console the big sailor and nurse his facial bruises.

This story began in No. 49 of the Ledger for Dec. 4. Back copies may be obtained from our agents or newsdealers.

CHAPTER XII.

ROGER'S authority as mate was no longer disputed. The crew accepted him without question or demure. Even Abel Freeman and Lije Coles took his orders meekly, and expeditiously carried them out. Ames, acting as second mate, ably assisted Roger, and took the deck in his absence.

At first Roger was suspicious of this meekness, and never permitted himself to be off guard. He was determined to sell his life dearly, and leave a lasting impression on the face or body of any who attempted to play unfair. Chic Doby avoided him persistently, keeping out of sight as much as possible. As he was not needed in navigating the schooner, Roger left him to his own devices, with the full liberty of the forward deck.

Once he spoke to Captain Holding about him, demanding to know his status. If he was to be treated as a common stowaway or sailor he was ready to break him in at the point of the pistol; but the old skipper shook his head negatively.

"We don't want trouble with Chic," he said. "So long's he behaves himself let him alone."

"He'll make trouble soon enough," growled Roger. "Why're you favoring him? He ought to be locked up."

Captain Holding brushed his eyes in agitation. "I'm aiming to be fair to Chic," he murmured. "I don't want to do anything else."

"Fair with him!" sniffed Roger. "Is he playing fair with you?"

"Mebbe not—mebbe not. I dunno. But for his mother's sake I ain't going to—to——"

Roger waited for him to finish his sentence, and then seeing he had no intention of explaining further, he burst out:

"What's his mother got to do with it?"

The old skipper's eyes grew worried and troubled; he shook his head and walked away.

Roger was angry, and followed him; then meeting Jane; he stopped her. He glared hard at her a moment before demanding:

"Why's your father afraid of Chic Doby? I got to know."

Jane regarded him seriously for a moment. "He isn't afraid of him," she said finally. "He could kill Chic Doby in a fair fight."

"Reckon he could," grinned Roger. "Then why don't he do it?"

"Because—because——"

She stammered and came to an abrupt stop.

Roger turned away in anger. "Don't tell me," he said irritably. "It's none of my business what everybody else aboard knows. I'm only first mate, and I'm not expected to know more'n what's good for me. Well, I don't."

Jane paused a moment, and then following swiftly after him she caught his arm. "Roger," she said quietly, "I'll tell you everything."

"No, I don't want to know," he answered, shaking off her hand. "Keep your secret. You and Ben can discuss it——"

"Roger!"

He stopped, and was immediately ashamed of his petulant outburst.

"I—I didn't mean that," he stammered, flushing.

"Come in the cabin, she added. "I want to speak to you alone."

Reluctantly, after much urging, he followed her, and, still protesting, listened to the whole story. As Jane briefly outlined it, the account of Chic's downfall and unreasoning hate was anything but pleasant.

Chic's mother had been a sister to Captain Holding's own beloved wife, and on her deathbed she had made the old skipper promise he would look after him as he would his own son. Accepting such a trust with more than the usual seriousness, the Captain had brought him up on equal terms with his own daughter, giving him a home and such social opportunities as his means permitted.

But early in life Chic displayed traits of character that caused increasing trouble and worry to his foster parent. Beginning in youth, he proved once more that the laws of heredity persisted from one generation to another. His father had been a shiftless, immoral character, and he handed these traits down to Chic, with a few others that had been dormant, for extra measure.

Drinking, gambling and stealing from the Captain, as opportunity afforded, in small, petty ways, formed only a part of the category of crimes laid at his door. In spite of his untrustworthiness, the skipper had given him a part interest in the Sky Pilot when he reached his majority, and took him away on trips, hoping hard work and the sea would reform him; but his hope was blasted almost at the outset.

Returning from a profitable trip, the Captain found an attachment had been legally executed against the schooner to secure payment for some heavy gambling debts Chic had contracted. To save the schooner, he had to pay them, using all his capital in the bank. Chic's interest in the Sky Pilot was at the same time canceled.

Angry and sullen at what he called robbery, the young man had left home to begin a wilder life than ever. A few months later he was convicted of a crime that meant a long prison sentence unless a sum almost equal to the total value of the Sky Pilot could be raised.

Captain Holding refused to come to his assistance; at the price of impoverishing himself and Jane. Chic had been forced to serve his term in prison where he nursed a spirit of vengeance, and when he came out he blamed all his troubles upon his foster-father and Jane. For two years he had been hounding and threatening them, scheming and planning to disgrace or ruin one or both. All the deviltry of his evil nature had been concentrated in this one ambition.

"I'm almost in despair at times," Jane added, when she had finished her tale. "Things can't go on forever like this. Father is getting old, and Chic's nagging threats drive him crazy. It's all I can do at times to keep him from killing Chic. I'm not sure but it will end in this way."

"How about you?" asked Roger. "Didn't he try to kill you that day I woke up?"

"Yes, but that was only in a fit of passion. I angered him. He's always been a little afraid of me. I don't think he'd deliberately try to hurt me."

Roger smiled skeptically. There was a way to hurt Captain Holding thru his daughter that might give Chic more satisfaction than killing his enemy outright.

"Chic's got some devilment up his sleeve," he murmured. "He didn't come on this trip for his health."

"No, but what can he do?" she asked anxiously.

Roger considered a moment. He glanced at the girl out of the corners of his eyes a second. "A lot of things," he said finally. "Start a mutiny aboard and seize the ship."

"He couldn't do that," smiled Jane. "Ben Ames and the crew are loyal to father. He couldn't corrupt them."

"Money will buy anything," growled Roger.

"Chic hasn't any."

"No," was the grinning retort, "but he may get it."

"I don't see how," she answered, frowning.

"I do. So does Chic." He paused and looked at her. "Does the Captain of this Nicaraguan steamer you're to meet know your father personally?"

"No," she admitted, shaking her head. "But he has a description of the schooner and knows her name."

"And when he gets the papers and treasure he hands over the reward, with no questions asked?" grinned Roger.

"Yes."

"It's a tidy little sum, too, ain't it?"

"I don't mind telling you. Father's to receive ten thousand dollars for delivering the papers to their rightful owners."

Roger whistled softly. "Ten thousand," he mused, "would go a long way toward corrupting a crew."

Jane frowned again. "It isn't Chic's money. He can't lay hands on it."

"Suppose," mused Roger, "he seized the schooner, and put the Captain and you in the hold? Wouldn't this Nicaraguan chap hand him the reward when he got the papers? If Chic said he was Captain of the Sky Pilot wouldn't that be sufficient?"

"Ben Ames wouldn't permit it. He'd expose Chic."

"But if Ben was promised a part of the reward?"

Jane shook her head slowly. "He isn't that kind. Besides," flushing, "he's in love with me."

"Sure! I know that. And when a man's in love with a pretty girl like you, he'd do almost anything to get her—anything short of murder. I reckon now, if you'd refused Ben——"

He stopped and glanced smilingly at her. She laughed and nodded. "I have," she admitted, "a dozen times."

Roger's face brightened, but he tried not to show it. "Then Ben thinks he hasn't any chance?" he continued slowly.

"No, it's settled," she said slowly. "I told him it was impossible, and he mustn't ask again."

Roger turned his head away to conceal the expression in his eyes. He was silent for a moment. "We got to reckon with the worst in him," he muttered finally. "If Ben's crossed in love, and don't see any way of getting you, maybe he'd listen to Chic's offer."

Jane shook her head positively. "He's not that kind, I told you. I trust him."

Roger waited a moment, and then went on: "Chic's a sly devil. He knows Ben hates me after giving him that licking the other day, and he knows he's in love with you. In that case what would Chic do?"

"Why—what do you think he'd do?" she stammered.

"I don't rightly know, of course, but knowing the cussedness of human nature, I'd make an even bet Chic'd add something to Ben's reward besides a share of the money."

"What?" she asked, her eyes opening in wonder.

"YOU!"

For a few moments she was very quiet, her mind trying to grasp the significance of his meaning. Then slowly a smile of incredulity crept into her face, and she shook her head.

"That's a foolish idea, Roger," she said gently. "You're misjudging Ben. He isn't like Chic."

"No, if he was Chic couldn't put it over," he replied irritably. "Ben's honest and simple-minded—just the kind that Chic can hypnotize and twist around his finger. First, Ben's got a grudge against me. Chic promises him he can satisfy it, he wants you, and presto! Chic says he can have you. Third, a big slice of this money would help to clinch matters. Ben might wake up later, and be sorry for it, but it would be too late then."

Roger was serious, and his very gravity had an effect upon her. The smile left her face, and her beautiful eyes narrowed in perplexity. Finally, she looked up and said:

"If such a preposterous thing were possible, there would be the crew—Abel Freeman and Lige Coles—both friends of father's. They wouldn't mutiny."

"They're friends of Ben, too, aren't they?"

"Yes."

"Then if Ben put up a likely story to them, and maybe threatened 'em, and promised 'em a big slice of the reward, wouldn't they listen?"

"I don't know," she admitted, looking troubled.

Again she was silent and thoughtful, her mind busy with unpleasant reflections. Roger watched her.

"Mutiny at sea's a serious crime," she murmured finally. "I don't think they would dare do it. Besides what would they do with us and the schooner afterward?"

Roger smiled and shrugged his shoulders. "I knew of one mutiny where the captain and first officer were killed in the uprising and their bodies chucked overboard. Later the ship was found sinking at sea—abandoned and scuttled by the crew."

Jane shuddered, and then shook her head slowly. "You don't know Ben Ames and father's crew," she said.

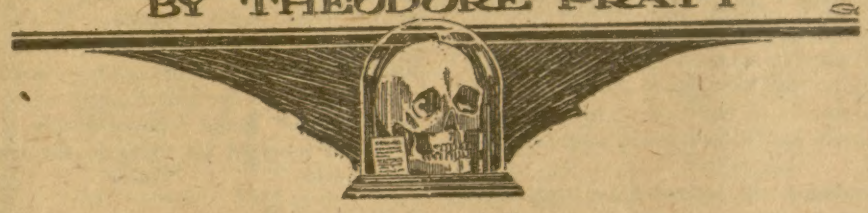
"No, but I know to what depths a man can fall. Look at me!"

The color crept slowly into her face at this direct challenge. Roger's eyes were cold and unflinching in their self-condemnation. While she watched him, half in pity and half in surprise, he continued in a hard voice: "I wasn't always like this, Jane. I was as good as Ben at one time, and a sight more skilful as a mate. I could have had about anything I asked for on the sea, even a master's license, and in time owned my own ship. Men liked me, hated me, feared me, but they all admired me. They knew I could get what I went after. I was a bit rough and hard, but I was clean—clean all the way thru. And then—then—I came to this—a dope fiend—a human derelict—so low down

(Continued on Page 14.)

The Man With the Odd Skull

BY THEODORE PRATT



THE man with the odd skull staggered out of the directors' meeting of the Natural History Museum. Great beads of sweat covered his high, dark, oddly-shaped forehead, his rather hazy blue eyes were dazed and his thin, sensitive mouth quivered with excitement. Clearly the man with the odd skull had been offered a larger sum for his bizarre cranium than ever before.

He slumped down beside a girl on the stone settee in the hall. Cutie Beautiful, the girl, was all that her name implied; she was a white, clinging, blond-haired lily, as apt at bleeding her victims as she was pretty. Cutie Beautiful knew that the head of the man with the odd skull meant money, that even was the reason she had accompanied him on his fourth trip to the museum.

"God!" the man cried hoarsely, "they've offered me ten thousand for it! To be paid in a lump when I sign . . . and they only want my head —when I die—not the body. Ten thousand—ten thousand dollars—to be paid in a lump . . ."

"Well, my Gawd, Frank, take it!" she burst out. "What good's your dome goin' to do you when you croak? Think what you can do with ten thou. Great jumpin' fishcakes!"

"But, Cutie," he protested, "they're gona cut me up, scrape out my brains and bleach my head. Then the people will come to look at it."

"You're yellow, Frank," she whispered to him. "What harm if they do? You won't be here. Think; ten thousand! You know, Frank, if you sign up, I might—you know, that splicin' you were talkin' about the other night."

"You mean that?" he bit out.

"Sure do," she returned.

He looked in her eyes for a minute, crushed her in his arms and kissed her red, babyish mouth heavily, then whirled back to the directors' meeting. When he had closed the door behind him Cutie wiped her cherry mouth with a grimace of disgust.

Five minutes later he again stepped out and stood staring stupidly down at a check for the coveted sum. Behind him was a signed agreement that upon his death his skull would go to the museum.

"Think—this is on the level, Cutie?" he stuttered.

She snatched the check from him, looked at the denomination and handing it back to him, said, "C'mon. We've just time to catch the bank. Then it's Paris models for mine."

"Go the limit, Cutie," he said, as they were whirled extravagantly away in a taxi, "since you've promised, you know."

Cutie went the limit, in fact went the limit with NC-4 rapidity, for nine-tenths of said copious boundaries were reached inside of two months. And as yet she had not assented to any of his pleas for the promised "splicin'."

After paying an exorbitant restaurant check one day Frank found he had an even thousand left.

"Look here, Cutie," he said, as he leaned over the table and held her with his blood-shot eyes. "It's about time our little act came off. What do you say about this afternoon? My ten thousand is about shot. And you've promised, you know," he reminded her.

"Oh, what's the rush, Frank?" she asked. "Wait awhile. Say next week. Suit?"

"Suppose so," he growled.

But the next week came and went, and then still another and the money was all gone. Together at their last meal he confessed:

"Cutie, I got to tell you. It's all gone. We're broke. But you'll still do what you said?"

"Huh," she said, "where do you get that stuff, 'we're broke?' You may be broke, but as for me —do you think I'd hang out with a bum?"

He looked at her queerly for a moment, then laughed. "Quit your foolin', Cutie, this is real serious."

He Deftly and Silently Slipped the Powder Into the China Cup.

"Oh, I'm serious all right," she came back, "I'm givin' you credit for givin' me one good time, but that's as far as it'll go. I'm thru, finished, done, enough; so long."

He stared at her, dumfounded. As she rose he grasped her roughly by the arm. "Look here, Cutie," he said hoarsely, "you're not playin' straight and you meant it all along. God, that I didn't see it before! Wait! I want to tell you that I don't give a d—n about you, now. It's—it's this skull business. They're gona cut me up an' all on account of you. Put my head in a show case, an' you did it. D—n you, anyway, I'll kill you for this!"

She left him, her eyes blazing, but fear in her heart.

AFTER that the life of the man with the odd skull was a long, horrible nightmare. In his dreams he could see his death and the slashing of his body on the operating table. He pictured his head as a gleaming white skull on some professor's desk. The idea obsessed him and he walked the streets, aimlessly waiting for death and the fulfillment of the agreement. He lived only to die and have his white-bleached skull fingered by interested people. He shrank and cowered at the thought. His very flesh shook and trembled at the inevitable.

"By the good God!" he would whisper to himself, "in the name of humanity, what a sale!" Then he would gaze wild-eyed at his own likeness in the mirror—at his own skull that he had sold for the price that he had been bled for. With this came the thoughts, the dreams, the horrible nightmares that he would elude them—that he would not let them have his skull.

But Cutie Beautiful never left his crazed mind. Altho he did not care so much about her deception, he was determined to have revenge because of the lugubrious future she had brought about for him.

It was not hard to get to know the cook of Cutie's boarding-house and pour upon her blatant adulation. Soon he stood so highly in her favor that he would often go to visit her and chat as she prepared the evening meal for Cutie and the rest of the boarders.

He had been waiting his opportunity and one evening seeing it, added:

"That coffee, Maria?" and he pointed to the steaming cups about to be taken into the table.

"That's what," said Maria. "Feel like some?"

"No, thanks," he replied; "and this little china cup, whose is that?"

"Oh, that's the little doll's—what do they call her—Cutie Beautiful, is it? She must have a special dainty china cup."

"I see," he said, and his hand holding a small folded paper of powder in his pocket trembled.

As soon as Maria's back was turned he deftly and silently slipped the powder into the china cup, and then with a hasty "Good-night," went out.

PEOPLE were still hustling and hurrying home from their day's work. He entered a building, one of these tall skyscrappers that seem to reach up to the very clouds, their tops hidden in the midst, stretching far beyond. It was not long before he was looking down on the street hundreds of feet below. He gazed awed at the minuteness of the world below him. Then he smiled once again, the smile of a victor. He would outwit them at last; they should not have his skull.

He breathed in gasps. He would outwit them; he would outwit them—it beat upon his brain—he would make his skull worthless so that they could not take it. He seemed crazed for a moment, and then with a last full gulp of air and a wild look about him he flung himself over the balustrade to the dizzying depths below. A piercing shriek smote the air as he sped like a plummet to the pavement.

Not far away the last few embers of a great fire glowed and grew dark in the blackened ruins. The Natural History Museum had burned to the ground, never to be built again.

R.S.V.P.

BY M.E. STEFFEY

A GREAT deal of thought preceded the choice of this title. What, you don't believe it? Accept, then, the proof. For long did I hesitate in an effort to be in vogue and yet not be insane.

I studied closely and pondered deeply "U & I, By a Well Known Psychological Student;" and "B, By a Former Suffragette;" and "I, By a Famous Ex-President," and many other oddities that may be found in print. I thought seriously of N. G., and C. O. D., and I. O. U., but finally decided that R. S. V. P., taken from the famous French phrase, "Respondez sil vous plait," or, as it is in English, "Answer, if you please!" is the most easily capitalized adulterant of common sense.

Having now very forcibly forced an opening, I will, thru the aperture, introduce Mountford Gordon and his distressing memories, for he was harking back.

Harking back is to memory what the nightmare is to the dream, therefore, Mountford Gordon was in the midst of a nightmare. He could only hark two years back, because any further would not have been a nightmare at all, but pleasant dreams.

Two years before he had gone into the world to gain advertising value for his name. He went by Pullman, a youth of 25, and returned by freight a bachelor of 27. He left his youth locked in a suitcase at a Chicago hotel in lieu of his board bill. By aid of a check from father, he redeemed his suitcase, but in some manner his youth seemed permanently misplaced.

As he harked he dropped his chin into his hand and gazed into the fire. It was a very trite thing for him to do, but he did it. Before him marched a very cynical and bitter procession of thoughts. He should have accepted this two years of experience as a part of Life's Apprenticeship, but he could not. Humanely, he sought for some one to blame; and devilishly, he persecuted his only sister, altho she had no part in the blame.

He couldn't approve of her in any way. Her mode of dress, her manner of speaking, her friends, and more especially her choice of literature, were all distasteful to him. Idle hours were filled by much reading which resulted in much discussion upon current literature. He gave his opinions forcefully and gratuitously and his sister Eleanor accepted them silently, if possible, or protestingly, if necessary.

The swing of the street door dispelled his nightmare. A song sounded, or rather was drowned by the slam of the door. It was probably a love song, for Eleanor, like all the world, loved a lover, but she loved him best on printed pages.

Still singing, she peeped into the living-room. The open fire was so cheerful and there was an appetizing odor from the dining-room. Life seemed so well worth living—but the sight of Mountford hushed her song.

He had not been out all day and he was sure to talk to some one tonight. He was the only fly in the ointment and he was not a fly—he was a bumblebee.

And now, having set the theater of war, and introduced, respectively, the offensive and defensive belligerents, action might as well begin.

The evening progressed, and yet all was quiet along the battle line; but Eleanor stealthily watched Mountford as she pretended to read something to which he could not object. Intuition, that delicate instrument, which is really a mental wireless operated by experience, was warning her that the enemy was drawing forth his heavy guns.

An impatient shuffle of Mountford's feet and an occasional disgusted grunt showed plainly the position of the enemy. The cold upstairs banished any thought of retreat, so Eleanor rose and walked quietly behind Mountford's chair to see, if possible, what he was reading, thus sending a spy into the enemy's camp to see if he were mobilizing.

As in all warfare, a very small match lighted the pile of oil-soaked chips that had fallen from the shoulders of the combatants.

"The Silver Must Cross," Were Madame's First Words.

"Ladies' Literature has started a contest to encourage writers to do better love stories," Mother announced, looking up anxiously from the pages of that magazine.

Mother had looked anxious for so many years that she could scarcely look any other way.

"Encourage scribblers to write love stories!" Mountford ejaculated and Eleanor knew that hostilities were well on the way.

"Great guns!" exploded Mountford, very appropriately.

"Love stories!" with much emphasis.

"Love stories!" with still more emphasis.

"Love stories!" with so much emphasis that the tone was nothing less than the distress of a lost soul.

Mountford should have been an evangelist. Imagine the effect upon his audience had he, in the same tones, repeated three times in succession, "Turn away!" adding at last, "While there is yet time."

Probably, had he not missed his calling, he would not now be a cynical failure, torturing his only sister to relieve his grudge against the world at large.

"Eleanor, there, ought to be one of the judges. She lives on printed love."

His even white teeth gleamed because of this shot. There was no answering smile or remark. It may be that Eleanor thought that by not answering the enemy's guns she could conceal her position. Of course, she was mistaken. Just as well fight a prepared enemy first as last.

"Love," he preached on, "is the abomination of modern literature. No writer since Stevenson has turned out anything worth the hot air and printer's ink it took to blow it up."

And he smiled at his own humor.

"Oh, not that again tonight, Mounty! I want to read," and she cast her eyes about the books in the room, "I want to read Bertha M. Clay——" and Father smiled from behind his paper.

She had intended that her first shot should contain asphyxiating gas and be final, but the gas wasn't strong enough.

"There is a certain respect—there is family affection——"

"Where?" asked Eleanor feebly.

"But most of all there is sex instinct—that's what is played up in your love stories."

HE CAUGHT up the magazine before him.

"Here you are," and a victorious advance seemed imminent.

"Here we have a man who cannot marry and a girl in love. Listen now; just listen! 'Her hat swung loosely upon her arm.' It always does. 'Her red hair was bound about her fair brow and held tightly with a black ribbon.' Thank Heaven it wasn't a red ribbon, anyway. The maiden speaks, listen—'Oh, Paul, I may not know what I am doing; I may not forsee the result—but I know that I am in love. I know that I was made for it. I was fashioned by my Maker for nothing else. At every hour of the day and night I hear you calling me. And those others, they call me, too, from every flower; from every bird and butterfly; from ever green leaf that shades the woody pastures. They all call me, saying, "Mother, Mother!" How can I resist them? O, Paul, dearest, stay, stay! This place is yours and I am in it. I am yours, stay with me. If not by right, then by wrong; if not by law, then without it.'"

Mountford looked at Father, who was unheeding; at Eleanor, who was outwardly placid; then to Mother, who was the only one properly shocked.

"That's love—true love, bereft of her trimmings."

He turned back to Eleanor and when she made no answer he said in his most aggravating tones, "R. S. V. P." which consumed far less breath and energy than the uttering of its longer equivalent, "Answer, if you please."

This was a tentative shot of Mountford's—a part of his regular ammunition. If the enemy was strongely quiet, he invited reply with just those four letters, and generally they brought on a violent engagement. These letters meant, in Mountford's particular tone of voice, "Answer that if you can," with a series of about three exclamation points following.

But this time the shot failed, for the victorious advance of the victor and the silent retreat of his enemy was accomplished by Eleanor's exit from the room.

At this, Father, as Eleanor's ally, said: "Mount, how old are you?"

"Why, Father, not to know the age of your only son?" from Mother.

"Well, I think he lived twenty years in place of two in Chicago. He's soured and cynical and mistaken. A failure admits it by seeking to revenge himself upon the institutions of life. Idleness has turned his head. I'll find something for you to do," he promised.

And now there was a forced armistice, because Father, still acting as Eleanor's ally, sent Mountford on a business trip to Florida, thus driving her opponent into the woods. But, Anxious Reader, be assured Eleanor shall follow him!

When her brother was ready to start, Eleanor extracted a promise from him that he would write her once each week, a letter that should be better reading than love stories. She chose his last ten minutes in the house for this jibe—probably because she was kin to Mountford, and cowardly.

So, by correspondence, he harpooned tarpon and hunted deer; he speared alligators, and, in a bathing suit, made the acquaintance of a shark in the bay. Eleanor read all this with deep interest and then turned to her favorite novelist.

At length there came no word at all. Mother worried and Father groaned as she voiced the imagined disasters that might, could or would overtake her son. Finally Father went out and sent a message of inquiry in regard to the boy.

Promptly there came a letter from the last town from which Mountford had written, proving that no news is not always good news. For:

> Your son of whom you inquire was in our town about six weeks ago. I regret to tell you that he became involved in a brawl with an Irish labor leader. The union man claims that your son flung letters of the alphabet at him which meant, "Raw Scab of a Vile Paddy!" A cutting scrape followed and the fellow lost a finger. Your son disappeared, as I understand that he thought the wounded man would die.

There was a P. S. that read: "The lost finger never was found."

Concealing the letter from Mother, Eleanor and her father discussed the feasibility of going in pusuit of Mountford. Father rubbed his rheumatic leg and objected, while Eleanor begged to be sent. After airing a few old-fashioned views about women traveling alone, he relented, and thus it was that

(Continued on Page 10.)

THE STRANGE SISTERS

By Harry Adler

PART II.

CHAPTER IV.

WITH a quaking heart but firm step Josie mounted the stairs. She wrapped the negligee close about her. She had removed simply her outer dress, shoes and stockings, and loosened the ribbons of her undergarments, slipping then into Beatrice's nightgown, kimono, boudoir slippers and cap. Her outward appearance she felt she could rely on, but could she, in intimate conversation, deceive a close friend of the girl's? Of course, it would not have to be for long—but it would not take many blunders to arouse suspicion. She gave silent thanks for the time she had devoted to acquiring the external polish of cultured society. At least her blunders should not be of that type.

At the head of the stairs Josie paused. Ahead of her stretched a long hallway. Two doors were open, the light from within the rooms slapping down in yellow patches on the hall floor. Josie surmised that one of the rooms was occupied by the girl that had called, while the other chamber was that of the girl whom she was impersonating.

From the nearest room came the girl's voice again:

"Oh, Beatrice! Where in the world are you?"

Once or twice Josie gulped; then:

"I'm coming—I am right here."

She entered the room; the last desperate step was taken.

Madeline was seated in bed, propped up by the pillows. Her thick, black hair hung in a heavy braid down her back. Nothing seemed further from her dark eyes than sleep.

"I thought you were lost," she complained. She tossed a pillow to the foot of the bed. "Climb up and make yourself comfy."

Josie, warily keeping her negligee about her to prevent a glimpse of her rather complete under-attire from betraying her, perched on the bed with her feet curled under her.

"I was looking thru a book," she murmured in explanation of her slowness. Her form lay relaxed and easy, but beneath the loose robe every muscle and nerve was tout, tense, ready for action at the first sign of danger. Her eyes, at her first swift glimpse about the room, had located the window, situated between the head of the bed and the dressing-table. Mentally she was reviewing the sketch of the house, straining to remember the position of porches and balconies that might offer an opportunity of escape from the window; she calculated the distance to the ground, should a drop be necessary.

"Books!—Books!" exclaimed Madeline, in reply to Josie's remark. "Don't you ever get tired of your books? You're a regular old maid!"

"Am I as bad as that?" queried Josie. She would have gladly let the other girl ramble on and do all the talking, but she certainly must herself open her mouth occasionally; to do otherwise would be courting sure disaster.

"You certainly are!" stated Madeline with conviction. "You are worse, because you haven't their excuse. An old maid at least can't help herself, but you, with all the fun you could get out of life . . ."

"What is fun in life?" Josie's "original" was apparently a "serious" girl; "philosophical" remarks therefore ought to be quite safely in character.

"Good heavens!" Madeline held up her hands in mock horror and rolled her eyes upward. "I declare I'm going to tell your father to ship you off to an old ladies' home! You positively are hopeless! The idea of a girl your age asking what fun in life is!" She leaned forward and shook a vigorous finger at Josie. "Listen to words of wisdom," she commanded, "the wisdom of Madeline Wellington—wisdom more profound than any writ in those ponderous tomes that you are forever poring over. For a feminine human of our age life holds but one enchantment—to be courted and made love to by men, the more men the greater the pleasure."

Josie laughed. Altho her watchfulness never relaxed an iota she was beginning to enjoy this fresh, vivacious young creature. A somewhat different type, she unconsciously reflected, from the furtive-eyed, feline, sordid drabs of her circle.

"That philosophy goes hard on the girl that can't find any suitors," she commented.

"You certainly don't need to trouble yourself about that!" vigorously asserted Madeline. "You could have half the men in town trailing after you—and yet it seems you despise them all."

"Do I?" rather coyly. Since she must speak, questioning was decidedly less hazardous than definite assertions, Josie shrewdly calculated; interrogations left so much larger loopholes for retreat.

Madeline leaned forward and clapped her hands together delightedly.

"Beatrice White!" she cried. "That is the nearest to a really human remark that I believe I have ever heard you utter!"

"You may discover that I am a real person, after all."

"Oh, Beatrice! You are a dear and I love you truly—you know I do! But I do wish you would be more warmly alive. Just think of poor Arthur—you never so much as give him a real, nice, friendly smile that he could consider his own personal property."

"Does he deserve it?"

"Why, Beatrice! You ought to be ashamed of yourself!" indignantly protested Madeline. "He's a dear boy and you know it! He hovers about you like a stray dog. He would do anything in the wide world for you and half the time you're not even civil to him."

Josie looked contrite. "I'll try to treat him nicer," she promised, wondering to what she was committing Beatrice.

"I'm going to tell Arthur that tomorrow;" Madeline bounced triumphantly out of bed.

Josie was beginning to wonder how soon she would be able to escape. Her attention was but half given to the conversation she was conducting with the girl, the other half of her mind being concerned with Frank and his captive, hidden in the garden, and the jewels in the library safe. Madeline seemed thoroly wide awake, rambling along from one topic of conversation to another, chattering vivaciously. This was a contingency Josie had not contemplated when embarking on her adventure, and the problem of extricating herself began to look admiringly perplexing.

IN THE meantime Frank lay concealed in the shrubbery with the immobile figure of Beatrice prostrate beside him. Troubled thoughts harassed him. In a rather mild fashion he was beginning to feel an affection for Josie; she would make an ideal mate for the prince of criminals he fatuously hoped to make of himself. Also, he dearly held to all the traditions of romantic banditry, chief among which was the principle of valiantly standing by a comrade in peril. Yet here was Josie facing who knew what dangers within the house, while he lay securely hidden outside. He glanced worriedly at the figure of Beatrice. Certainly he could not leave her to attempt to aid Josie. To do so would be the surest way of bringing disaster upon Josie, for single-handed was the only way she could play her hand within the house and to risk the danger of Beatrice awakening from the chloroform and giving the alarm was unthinkable. Frank, noting the quiet reigning about the place, reassured himself and settled back to wait patiently; obviously no alarm had as yet been raised.

Slowly the time passed. No sound issued from the house; nor did Josie reappear to resume their assault on the library safe. The tedium of the wait made the time elapsing appear much longer than it really was; still, Beatrice must soon be emerging from the effects of the chloroform administered by Josie. What to do then with her was a problem that Frank began to contemplate with alarm. Also, despite the peacefulness of the situation, he began again to fear for the safety of Josie. Surely, if all had gone well, she could have gotten away by this time.

Frank determined on a reconnaissance. Beatrice seemed still in deep unconsciousness. Assuring himself of this, Frank slipped away to circle the house for any signs of life he might be able to discover. He turned the corner. From two upstairs rooms the light streamed out; the lower halves of the windows were thrown up and the curtains were but partially drawn so that the balmy summer air might pour into the rooms.

Who Says He Can't Start a Serial With the Second Installment?

Josie Burke.

Beatrice White.

LET him step forward. Now, what's the trouble? An installment can't be condensed into such a small space? Too many characters to get acquainted with? Too many incidents to be retold? Nonsense! Just let us have the floor for a minute.

Now suppose we should merely mention to you that E. Lancaster White, a prominent member of upper society, was no other than "Bull" White, an underworld leader and head of a band of big-time crooks? Nothing difficult to comprehend about that, is there? And suppose we should furthermore mention to you that "Bull" White, this king-pin of crookdom, had a daughter who went about in the underworld simply as Josie Burke; and, as E. Lancaster White, also had a beautiful and finely educated daughter, by a different mother, in the upper stratum of society named Beatrice White? Ah—each of the daughters, you say, must be half-sisters? Exactly, and as like each other in appearance as two peas in the same pod. And we'll tell you something on the side. Neither girl knew the other existed.

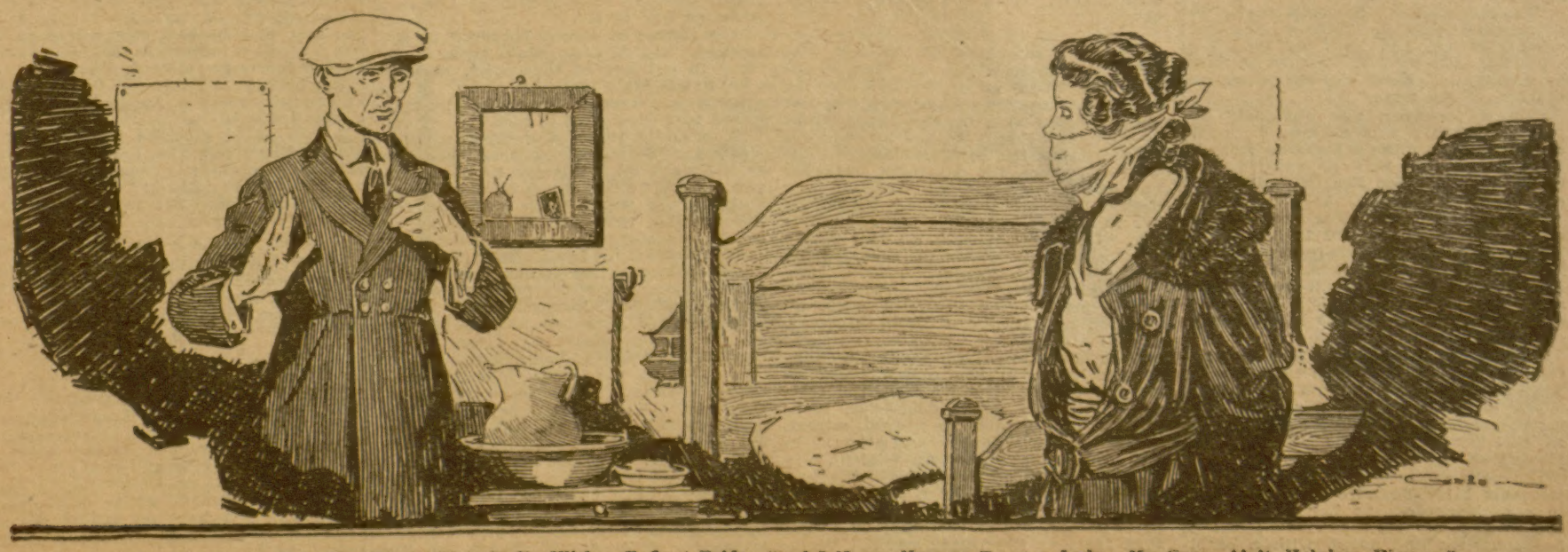
These are merely interesting characters, you say. What has happened?

Well, Josie Burke, armed with the combination of a certain safe in a mansion on Long Island, went to that home late one Saturday night with Frank Logan, another crook, to clean out the diamonds which quite naturally would be deposited over night by the guests at the week-end party going on there. Now if you're at all astute you can guess the complications in the story—guess that Beatrice White is one of the guests at that house party. But how much can you forsee of the rest?

You can doubtlessly visualize Frank and Josie burglarizing that safe. You can visualize Beatrice herself coming downstairs in the night, revolver in hand, the only one of all the guests who hears the noise. And you can visualize the quick scuffle, the chloroforming of the night-gowned girl.

What must Josie's thoughts have been when, by the light of the dark lantern, she discovered that the chloroformed girl was almost a twin to herself? One thing is certain. Daredevil that she was, she garbed the unconscious duplicate of herself in her own outer clothing, and slipped the other's nightgown over her own body, while Frank Logan in the meantime prepared the waiting automobile to carry the insensate girl herself off to a New York house owned by "the gang" and there keep her prisoner for a week.

For a week! Just a week. Josie wanted one week in society—and here was her chance. Now, there, in vivid brevity, is your first installment, a little story in itself. Can Josie, the underworld girl, "get away with it" in the upper world? Let's go on with the yarn.



"I'm a Gentleman"—He Drew Himself Up With a Defiant Pride—"and I Know How to Treat a Lady. My Game Ain't Helpless Women."

In one of those rooms, Frank concluded, Josie must be. How to attract her attention, tho, was a problem. The smooth wall offered scant opportunity for scaling it; besides, he did not know whether the girl were alone. Softly he gave three imitation owl hoots. It was a signal he and Josie often used in their nocturnal enterprises and while in this case they had not prearranged any signal he hoped she would hear and understand.

His hope was justified. Josie, within the room above, heard the softly sounded calls and immediately divined their origin. Also she guessed what had driven Frank to seek her out; Beatrice must be showing signs of returning consciousness.

Josie's keen eye darted about the room, her wits alert to their utmost. Madeline was engrossed in her own prattle. On the dressing-table by the window Josie spied a dance card with a dainty-colored pencil appended thereto by a silken cord. Languidly she slipped from the bed and sauntered over to the dressing-table, dropping onto the chair before it. Her right hand dropped over the dance card; she leaned forward, exploring her face with her left hand, and carefully studied the glass, apparently absorbed in a search for a wrinkle or blemish. Swiftly her right hand wrote across the nearly blank outside of the card.

Her message completed, she rose, went to the window and leaned against the sill for a moment, allowing the white bit of paper to flutter out and to the ground. She saw Frank's dark figure detach itself from the base of the wall, creep over to the small white spot and seize it; then the partially hidden beam of light as he read the message. A few moments he appeared to hesitate; then the light and the shadow disappeared.

Josie went back to her perch on the foot of the bed.

Madeline was beginning to feel sleepy. With the back of her hand she suppressed a dainty yawn.

"It's pretty nearly time for us to get to sleep," she said. "It's a scandalous hour to still be awake."

She hopped out of bed and shook the pillows up.

"Go get the pillows from your bed, Beatrice," she suggested, "and sleep with me. It's so much more comfy."

Josie left the room, shutting the door behind her. Out in the hall she paused. To try to rob the safe now was out of the question; to attempt to escape would also be hazardous, since a but slightly prolonged absence would result in an investigation by Madeline and an alarm being raised ere she could reach a safe distance.

She must see it thru.

Swiftly she glided into the lighted room adjoining Madeline's. In a few moments she had removed her clothes and let down her hair. Properly prepared for sleep and carrying the two lace-edged pillows she turned off the light and went back to Madeline's room.

A curious thrill went thru Josie's body as she stretched out by the side of this dainty, exquisite, sweet-scented creature. Some day, according to her mother, she would be able to take such a place as hers by right, but today. . . .

Madeline gave Josie an affectionate little hug, kissed her good night, and with her arm curled about the other's neck closed her eyes for the night.

For a long while Josie lay in the dark, with her senses keenly alert, waiting for Madeline to fall soundly enough asleep to make safe her own retreat. But each time, just as she thought the other had sufficiently relaxed, the girl would give a restless toss and wind her arms closer about her companion. As the night wore on the quiet and darkness got in their work on Josie herself; drowsiness weighted her eyelids; and at length, her mission and her safety forgotten, she fell into a heavy slumber.

FRANK'S first inclination on reading Josie's note had been to protect her judgment and action.

"Can't ditch her," the card read, "but getting along O. K. Take girl to East Twenty-Second and lock her up. Will try finish job myself. Otherwise have to give it up. Keep girl safe—perhaps ransom. Keep mum."

Protest, however, was obviously impossible. There was nothing he could do but accept Josie's decision and the most practicable way of assuring her safety was to place Beatrice where she could not interfere.

Frank went back to where Beatrice still lay unconscious and lifting her in his arms hastened to where he and Josie had left their automobile, outside the grounds. It was a small, inclosed car and possessed of an engine of far greater power than would have been suspected from its appearance.

Within the car Frank took precautions against Beatrice's awakening. With some rope taken from the tool kit he fastened her hands behind her; over her mouth he securely tied a silk muffler. He laid her down on the back seat and started off.

His action was just in time. A few moments later Beatrice struggled back to consciousness. As her wits slowly came back she took terrified stock of her condition and noted, with a heart-sickening shock, that she was being transported at rapid speed to some unknown destination and fate, at which she could only conjecture. She struggled to cry out, but could emit only the faintest gurgle.

Frank, hearing the sound of her struggles behind him, half turned his head.

"Take it easy," he cautioned. "It won't do you any good to try to free yourself or scream, so you might just as well save your energies."

After a short pause he spoke again.

"Don't be scared. I ain't going to hurt you. That ain't our game. I'm awful sorry to have to bother with you at all; wouldn't, have done it if you hadn't butted into our game. Awful foolish of you to do that. But we won't hurt you any. We've just got to keep you under cover for a little while, then we'll see that you get home safe enough."

After some distance he stopped the car.

"I'll have to blindfold you," he said regretfully. "Sorry to do it but can't take a chance on your locating our place and talking later on."

Carefully he bound up her eyes, but a curious chivalry in his makeup caused him to exercise care lest the bandage be painful. This accomplished, they got into motion again.

At length Frank stopped in front of the thieves' rendezvous in East Twenty-Second street. Keeping his engine running he cautiously peered out. The street was deserted.

"Now just take it easy and don't give any trouble," Frank warned, "and you'll get along O. K. It won't do you no good to try anything and it'll only force me to get rough—and I hate to do that with a lady. So you'd better be sensible."

HE HELPED Beatrice to her feet within the machine and then, as one might escort a lady to her own door, he led her by the arm up the high flight of stone steps and thru the heavy front door of the house. Within, he switched on the lights, led Beatrice down a hallway to where the staircase ascended and, still leading her, mounted two long flights. On the third floor he guided her to a room at the rear of the building, within which, when he had turned on the light, he at length removed the bandage from her eyes.

The girl looked about fearfully. She saw a small room, equipped with an old-fashioned, heavy, wooden bedstead, plain pine table, one cane-seated, light oak chair and one high-backed, mahogany rocker. In one corner stood an old-fashioned washstand, with the mirror gone, this latter deficiency, however, being remedied by a small mirror, nailed crookedly to the wall above. On one wall hung askew an ancient, fly-specked print of George Washington, flanked on one side by a gaudy liquor advertising calendar of a year several since passed, and on the other by a page torn from an illustrated weekly, showing a galaxy of buxom stage charmers. The room's single window was filled with a heavy iron grating. A single electric light bulb, dangling from the center of the ceiling, furnished the illumination.

Frank spoke:

"Honest, lady, I'm awful sorry for this; but it can't be helped now. And you're going to get the best of treatment, if you'll only do the right thing. I'm a gentleman"—he drew himself up with a defiant pride—"and I know how to treat a lady. My game ain't helpless women. But now here's where it's up to you: There are other men that come to this house, but they never come up here ordinarily. If you scream and attract their attention they'll come up to investigate—and some of them ain't gentlemen. If you keep quiet nobody'll know you're here but me—and when the proper time comes I'll see that you get out of here safely and none the worse for your little experience. Will you give me your word as a lady that you won't scream or do anything like that if I take off that gag? I know it's uncomfortable and I don't like to make you wear it, but I can't take no chances."

Beatrice studied the face before her. It was not a handsome nor pleasing countenance, yet she detected in it a pride and an idealism of a sort that made her feel that she really meant what he said. At least she could be no worse off by accepting his offer. If her judgment later should dictate crying for help certainly she could not be in honor bound to respect a promise given to such a person under such circumstances. She nodded her head in token of her promise and Frank at once removed the bandage. A second he hesitated; then he stepped behind her and unbound her wrists.

"I'm taking a chance, I guess," he remarked, "but at that you'd have to go some to get out of this room, even if your hands ain't tied up."

Beatrice stepped close to him and raised tear-filled eyes to him.

"You claim to be a gentleman," she pleaded. "What have I done that you should make me a prisoner here? I give you my word that if you turn me loose I shall keep secret what I saw in the library and that I'll do my best to shield you should it become known."

Frank shook his head. Beatrice seized his shoulders in her hands and begged on.

"Oh, don't, don't keep me here! I'll do anything—I'll give you money—but let me go—please, please—Oh, my God!" She sank sobbing to her knees.

"Aw, come now, lady," Frank protested. "There ain't no use carrying on this way." He stooped down, lifted the girl, and led her to the bed, where she dropped across it, shaken in every fiber of her body. Awkwardly Frank stood above her, racking his brain for words of comfort; but somehow he felt that any words that he could utter would fail to bring solace to his suffering captive. He gave a gentle pat to the quaking shoulders and softly went out of the room, closing the door behind him, the lock snapping into place with a click that struck like a mallet against Beatrice's heart.

The next installment shows whether or not Josie got away with it, among Beatrice's friends. While Josie is a clever person, she has, so to speak, her "hands full" in a task like that. This is one of the most entertaining stories the editorial staff has considered for many a month.

AN OLD FAVORITE

A Poem That Has Grown Yellow In Many Scrap Books

One Each Week — Selection No. 6

THE LOW-DOWN WHITE

BY ROBERT W. SERVICE.

This is the pay-day up at the mines, when the bearded brutes come down;
There's money to burn in the streets tonight, so I've sent my klooch to town,
With a haggard face and a ribband of red entwined in her hair of brown.

And I know at the dawn she'll come reeling home with the bottles, one, two, three—
One for herself, to drown her shame, and two big bottles for me,
To make me forget the thing I am and the man I used to be.

To make me forget the brand of the dog, as I crouch in this hideous place;
To make me forget once I kindled the light of love in a lady's face,
Where even the squalid Siwash now holds me a black disgrace.

Oh, I have guarded my secret well! And who would dream as I speak
In a tribal tongue like a rogue unhung, 'mid the ranch-house filth and reek,
I could roll to bed with a Latin phrase and rise with a verse of Greek?

Yet I was a senior prizeman once, and the pride of a college eight;
Called to the bar—my friends were true! but they could not keep me straight;
Then came the divorce, and I went abroad and "died" on the River Plate.

But I'm not dead yet; tho with half a lung there isn't time to spare,
And I hope that the year will see me out, and, thank God, no one will care—
Save maybe the little slim Siwash girl with the rose of shame in her hair.

She will come with the dawn, and the dawn is near; I can see its evil glow,
Like a corpse-light seen thru a frosty pane in a night of want and woe;
And yonder she comes by the bleak bull-pines, swift, staggering thru the snow.

The Hundredth Slip

BY ARTHUR H. SEVERSON.

JOHN T. WARREN and I had been schoolmates. I had not met him for some years and, with a view to congratulating him on his success as a writer of fiction, I visited him at his handsome apartments on Riverside Drive. I expected to find a man full of energy and the joy of living, but a more dejected appearing person I have never seen. He greeted me cordially enough, tho, and pressed me to stay to dinner, which I did. The food was excellent and well prepared by a capable Jap. Then did I marvel the more that a man having all the creature comforts should be in the Slough of Despond. Finally I said to him:

"John, we were great friends once. You appear to have the blues. Is there anything I can——?"

He held up his hand.

"Nothing," he answered in a tone of utter hopelessness, then added:

"Yes, we were great friends once, and because of it I am going to tell you why I have almost ceased to smile—why life seems barren and desolate.

And he related to me the following:

TWO years ago I was a reporter on the Star and doing a little short-story writing as a side line. My stuff was returned to me regularly, accompanied by the usual rejection slip. One morning after I had examined my mail and found two of my wandering ones had been returned to the home address, I was suddenly struck by an idea.

Most of my friends were collectors of things; one of books, another of play bills, another of coins, and so on. "Now," thought I, "I will become a collector, too. Certainly, I am not going to achieve success as a writer. Why not collect rejection slips?"

After that I wrote almost feverishly. In fact, I abandoned my usual rounds, with the exception of an occasional short visit to the club. In the course of a few months I had accumulated quite a stack of rejection slips—blue, white, green, pink—all colors. I wrote the date of their receipt on the top just above the name of the magazine or its publishers. Do you see those little boxes in the corner? They contain slips sorted according to month received. Well, I had collected just ninety-nine of them and was looking forward eagerly to the one hundredth when the blow fell.

I well remember the date. It happened to be my day off and this time I was examining the afternoon instead of the morning mail. I saw nothing so bulky as returned manuscript and therefore proceeded leisurely to peruse two or three duns and a brief letter from an uncle inviting me to go fishing with him. One piece remained. I opened the envelope and to my utter surprise found a check as payment for a short story entitled, "Mulligan, the Derelict." You remember the story. You mentioned it a while ago.

That was just the beginning. Everything I wrote was accepted. I could not get that hundredth slip. In despair I sent out the old manuscripts to the ones who had rejected them. I got none of them back, but received checks instead. I wrote an insulting letter to an editor with whom I was well acquainted and informed him of my collection and of the fact that he had once added to it, but had since accepted the same story he had formerly rejected. What do you think he did? Published the letter as an exquisite piece of humor and sent me a check for it.

I have never received that hundredth slip. I know now that I never shall, for this very morning I resolved to cease writing, for, thought I:

"At least I need not be bothered with their d—d checks!"

* * * * * * *

My friend paused, laughed in a peculiar manner and reached for the wine bottle. I saw in his eyes the light of madness, so I seized my hat and got out.

Giving Him a Chance.

"THAT was the most attentive audience on the courthouse square I ever addressed," said Congressman Flippers. "Why, my hearers seemed to hang on every word I spoke."

"I kinder noticed that myself," said Squire Witherbee. "I guess maybe they thought if you kept on talkin' for an hour or so you might eventually say something."

The Titian of Tzintzuntzan

By Robert Ordway Foote

Told In Last Week's Installment

CAPTAIN VAN LAW and HOLLIDAY, his employer, having become more eager than ever to secure the painting, proceeded to enlarge their plans to obtain it, at all hazards, and resolved to safeguard their plans at all points. This they decided was quite necessary if they were to outwit the triumverate working against them, namely, the smooth-tongued Governor, the former bandit chief and the mysterious fellow in priest's garb. Desperate measures must now be pursued by both sides to obtain the almost priceless "Titian of Tzintzuntzan."

This story began in No. 48, the Ledger for Nov. 27. Back copies may be obtained from our agents or from newsdealers.

CHAPTER XV.

A FIGHT IN THE WATER.

AS A CONVEYANCE to the Cordova house and thence to the waterfront, Captain Van Law singled out of the several decrepit old American flivvers on the main street that particular car and driver which had taken him there on his arrival. The Captain had several times observed the man and always noted the shrinking of the fellow from his sight. Evidently he had been thoroly cowed by the beating administered to him and it was a chauffeur in entirely humbled spirit that Van Law wanted this night. He desired no complications, no interruptions for the necessity of subduing another of these treacherous creatures.

With positive injunctions to the man to wait outside for a load of passengers and with implied threats supplemented by open promises of suitable reward for obedience, the American knocked and was admitted to the now familiar interior of the former bandit's comfortable home. The room was lighted by but half its customary number of candles. Cordova was impatiently awaiting him, pacing back and forth nervously.

In the corner sat huddled a scarcely recognizable Carmelita, swathed in many wraps; by her side a servant, whose dark face hardly showed beneath the many coverings she had put not alone upon her squat figure, but upon her head. Going a journey was a momentous occasion for these two, it appeared. They were wide-eyed and silent.

"There it is," came the guttural Spanish of Cordova. He waved his hand to the Titian, toward which the eyes of the American had involuntarily traveled upon his entry. Van Law wondered, as he approached the painting, if these dim lights were with a purpose, if a substitution had been made. The illumination was too dim to distinguish, without attracting attention, the secret mark made by Holiday, but pushing the frame out from the wall Van Law could easily see his own boldly scrawled name where he had written it across the back of the canvas.

Satisfied that at last fear had entered into the hearts of these artistic deceivers, or, if sophistry was to be attempted, it was planned for later, he motioned the retired robber to help him swing the heavily framed painting down from its hanging. Cordova responded with alacrity, and in a few minutes the stretched canvas had been removed from the heavy gilt frame, an atrocity provided since the days of its church exhibition.

The Captain had come carefully prepared for what he must do with this almost priceless bit of canvas. It was mounted by pasting along the edges to modern canvas which was in turn tacked to the stretcher. With his knife Van Law carefully cut the new canvas along the line of its juncture with the old. The collapsible tin receptacle which, spread out, made a case forty inches long and six in diameter, nicely accommodated the carefully rolled Titian. With elaborate and ostentatious care, which was not wasted upon the watchers, he sealed the case with a species of freight-car seal, provided by the thoughtful Holliday.

"There, no one can tamper with that without our knowing it," he said. "The picture is still yours, senor, until we get to San Diego and it is fully paid for. You better retain custody of it. If it is ever necessary to open this case for customs men call me and we will open it together and I will reseal it."

The idea of making Cordova still the custodian of the painting pleased him. It would simplify matters if he himself found it necessary to remain behind, thru failure of Holliday to appear. For to remain behind to protect the independent but, he felt, distinctly endangered Senorita Guadalupe Moreau he was firmly determined upon, cost what it might in regard to the negotiations for the picture. If Holliday or the priests had not enough interest in their deals to stick about when they were most needed, on their own heads be the failure of their respective plans.

Van Law's intention of remaining in Ensenada, sending Cordova on alone if necessary or keeping the entire party back, was soon to receive added stimulus.

He ushered the party, which was heavily burdened as to baggage for so short a trip as this was to be, outside.

Persuasion had prevailed with the pock-marked driver. The aged gasoline conveyance still stood at the door and with the appearance of the passengers was put into a state of panting impatience by its master. The Captain helped Senorita Carmelita and her servant into the rear seat, motioned Cordova to join them and himself climbed up beside the driver of the car.

"The wharf," he commanded.

Slowly the car gathered momentum as it passed by the long, white building. Captain Van Law, studying the structure, had a fleeting but penetrating glance thru one of the high, barred windows. A single candle furnished faint illumination for the interior, but enough that the observant passer was able to see a couch, an upraised white forearm and a mass of Titian hair pillowed up on it; the upper part of a figure yielded to despair; Senorita Moreau abandoned to the horrors which she must see lying before her.

Under his breadth the American cursed. If slightest compunction had previously existed at forsaking his real mission for a romantic errand of protection for this enigmatical red-haired person, it was banished by that short glance at the girl as he had never before seen her or scarcely dreamed her, bereft of her stanch self-reliance. He could scarcely restrain himself from turning upon Cordova with bitter reproach for the calm way in which the bandit was leaving her behind.

Tho no Holliday was in evidence at the wharf, which was a busy scene with the approaching departure of the night steamer, there was another person present to bid the party Godspeed. Governor Del Valle's magnificent limousine was drawn up on the pier and the executive himself paced the uneven boards.

"Your boat is getting impatient, listen to it," he greeted the little group, collectively, genially, great good nature reflected in his face as it was illuminated by the flaring gasoline lamps of the wharf. To Cordova he said, "This will be a delightful as well as profitable trip for you, my friend. Bon voyage. When may I expect you and the senorita back?"

As he spoke it was noticeable that he endeavored to edge the deliberate group toward the ladder descending to the float beside which the small launch pulsated anxiously. But the group, or at least its directing member, for the Cordovas betrayed a tendency to regard Van Law rather than the Governor as their guide, was not thus to be sped upon its journey. The American Captain held back. Quietly he began to roll a cigarette, seating himself on an uprising pile.

"No rush, your excellency, I have to wait for a friend before we start," he said indolently. "We may not get away for an hour or two."

"For what friend?" It was the ex-bandit, not the Governor, who fairly hurled the question. Openly approaching the Captain, Cordova hoarsely whis-

(Continued on Page 11.)

50 Eggs Are Better Than 10 No Matter What Feed Costs

WHAT would you think of a person who deliberately or thoughtlessly THREW MONEY AWAY? What would you think of a person who HARVESTED ONLY HALF OF HIS STANDING CROPS? You would probably think such a person was WASTEFUL—and WORSE. You would probably think such a person HAD A MILLION DOLLARS OR MORE IN THE BANK—yet if I told you that YOU were UNKNOWINGLY doing something as WASTEFUL as this, YOU WOULD BE AMAZED. Yet that is exactly my message to you NOW. LET ME PROVE TO YOU THAT

You Are Throwing Money Away

At this writing *eggs* are selling in cities at $1.00 to $1.15 per dozen. *Feed is cheap* and hens are *laying* better than in years. *But still you are throwing money away* because you are *not* getting *all* the eggs that you *should*. You are *harvesting only a half crop of eggs. You can get twice as many eggs* from the same number of hens. Therefore you are *losing money every day*—the money you *should* be getting—the money you can *now* easily *get*. Yes—you can *double* the *egg yield* at a cost so small that *you will never notice it!* Let me tell you *how*.

The Highest Priced Crop on Your Place

Eggs are high. But *even if they go down* you still will want your hens to produce as *many as they possibly can*. And unless you are getting an *egg a day* from each hen *you are not getting all the eggs your hens could lay!* Of course if you are *satisfied* with less than your rightful share of egg profits *that's up to you*. But if you *figure your profits closely* you know that whether eggs are high or low, whether feed is high or low, whether hens are laying abundantly or not *more eggs* mean *more money for you*. I claim that my great *egg maker* will at least double the egg production. *I guarantee* it. If it doesn't, it won't cost you a cent. Read my astonishing offer.

Let Me Prove It! Send No Money

Send no money. Just mail the coupon. My great Egg Maker is called "Two-for-One." I want to send you some to try. Joe Brabec, Jr., of Mount Olive, Ill., gave his hens "Two-for-One" and got 336 eggs last November from 12 hens. Mrs. T. T. Sirmons, of Milltown, Ga., got 469 eggs from 19 hens in one month. Mrs. J. A. Doll, of Corinth, Mass., in one month got 709 eggs from 25 hens. Mrs. T. W. Wills, of San Diego, Calif., writes that her 42 hens laid 1,260 eggs in one month. Mrs. R. Hegi, of Buckeye, Ariz., got 93 eggs a day from 100 hens in one month. Your hens can do as well, if you give them "Two-for-One." That's because "Two-for-One" contains Iron Sulphate for the bone building and strengthening, Precipitated Calcium Phosphate for shell-forming material, Ginger for a general tonic, invigorator and to sharpen the appetite, and Aloes as a gentle yet effective laxative and intestinal antiseptic. These four ingredients are just what hens need. If they are laying, these ingredients will make them lay *that much better*. If your hens are *not* laying, these ingredients will *make* them lay. Over 150,000 poultry raisers have *proven* it.

Mail Coupon! Get The BIG Profits!

If you figure that **50 eggs** are better than 10—if you figure that **100 eggs** are better than 20—if you figure that the **more eggs you get** the **more money** you will make—provided it cost but ***one cent per dozen*** for the **extra eggs,** then I want to send you my great Egg Maker to try 30 days. I want a chance to prove to you, at my risk that "Two-for-One" will bring you extra eggs, no matter how well your hens may now be laying. Don't send any money now. Just send me the coupon. I will mail you "Two-for-One" prepaid. Try it 10 days, 20 days or 30 days. Watch for results. If you are not completely satisfied, "Two-for-One" won't cost you a cent. The publisher of this paper guarantees that I will refund your money at once upon your mere request if you are not more than pleased. Remember, **you are losing money every day you are satisfied** with the egg yield! You can increase it—multiply it by two, three or even **five.** Make me **prove** it at my risk. Mail the coupon or a letter. Don't put this off—write me now before you forget.

H. E. GOODRICH, President
Kinsella Company **2019 Bonheur Bldg., Chicago, Ill.**

Kinsella Company, 2019 Bonheur Bldg., Chicago, Ill.

Dear Mr. Goodrich: If my hens do not lay extra eggs as a result of "Two-for-One" you guarantee to refund my money on request. On this condition you may send me the following, as checked, on 30 days' trial.

☐ One package of "Two-for-One," for which I will pay the postman $1.00 upon arrival.

☐ Three packages of "Two-for-One," for which I will pay the postman $2.25 upon arrival.

Name _____

P. O. _____

State _____ R. F. D. _____

R. S. V. P.

(Concluded From Page 6.)

Eleanor found herself steaming south.

She reached Jacksonville on a summery morning in March and decided to see a little of the city before going on. Drivers of sight-seeing automobiles begged to show her, but she preferred the primitive mode of locomotion.

Being a good walker, she wandered far, and after a time saw a sign: "Madame Garavolini, Clairvoyant and Palmist. Futures foretold. Pasts revealed. Lost relatives located."

The last promise caught Eleanor's attention. After some hesitation she exchanged a bill for eight silver quarters and went in. She found herself in a small room scented and darkened to mystify the senses. A black figure appeared, disappeared, reappeared, and motioned her caller in.

This seer was strangely silent, which was a bit of wisdom on her part, as silence mystifies the sense of hearing as darkness does the sense of sight or odor the sense of smell. Besides, the less you say, the more knowledge will your hearers accredit you. This is a trick practiced by all doctors, some professors, and no clergymen.

A Little Closer and She Heard Voices.

MADAME'S first words were: "The silver must cross," and Eleanor passed over a silver quarter. Madame dealt the future generously and for the sake of safety ignored the past. She foresaw many trials and tribulations for Eleanor, including marriage. She thought Eleanor was seeking something, but she could not see very well what—a lost fortune—or a will—for a jewel—or a little child—or—and Madame went on and named about everything that had ever been lost and sought, except a reputation, or, perhaps, Mountford's youth.

Occasionally she asked for a passage of silver, and Eleanor, having plenty of quarters, bought the future as gas from a meter.

Madame purported to go into the darkness or silence or somewhere that Eleanor could not follow and requested that Eleanor, speaking only with her lips, mention the thing for which she sought.

So Eleanor formed with her lips the question, "Where is my brother and what became of the finger?"

"Your mother——" the seer said.

"Oh, no, not my mother——"

At which the teller pretended to be speaking of her brother all the time.

"Can it be," the seer asked, "that your brother is deformed or at some time lost a finger?"

"Wait," the seer continued, "he cannot be born with eleven fingers. I see eleven, I think."

Eleanor laughed, while she puzzled over the woman's method. But now the Madame began to see.

"It is a trouble. The finger is a sign. It points, you follow; there you find your brother. The finger brings him riches, I think; I see it in his pocket anyway—and happiness—and reforms his ways."

Eleanor was anxious to believe that anyway. But as she had now fed the Madame six quarters, she declined any further information and went out. She wondered how the Madame happened to hit upon the very thing about which she had been consulted. She forgot about thinking with her lips.

Indecision showed in her manner as she retraced her steps. Something ahead caught her eye—a black signboard with a white index finger extended.

"The finger points, you follow and there you find your brother," she recalled.

Laughing at her own foolishness, she followed. It pointed to another sign that read enigmatically: "Ask Mr. Poster. He probably knows."

She imagined herself inside asking this Mr. Poster: "Where is my brother?" and laughed again. But she went in.

A young person met her at the desk and stood waiting for her to speak. She knew that he was young by the maze of confusion that enveloped her. It seemed that this was a place where one might exchange questions or answers without paying discount or bonus. She was not in Paris, remember.

She spoke with hesitation. She knew what she wanted to ask, but she didn't know how to ask it.

"Is there a colony of old bach——" she stopped when she saw how her inquiry was about to end. With fresh courage she spoke again. "Is there a place in Florida where women are not allowed?"

This sounded almost as ridiculous, so she hastened to explain, "Where men are living alone—where there are not many women, I mean."

The clerk pretended not to see the color that tortured her face and tried not to show surprise. He wondered why so good looking a woman needed to be seeking a place where competition was limited.

Turning to a book that gave all places of interest and modes and means of reaching them, he pointed to: "St. Cloud: Old Soldiers' Home."

"Oh, no," she protested, "younger men than that," which added to her embarrassment and his amusement.

"Well, no, ma'am. I don't know of any such place. There are the hunting clubs, but the ladies go there. I believe there are places in the Everglades where men homestead by themselves. But I don't know of a bachelor's colony anywhere around here, at least."

She thanked him and turned away in annoyance. It is an unpleasant thing to remember having appeared ridiculous in another's eyes—especially when that other is young and handsome and of the opposite sex. Why hadn't she told the man that she was seeking her brother? But then she could not explain that her brother didn't believe in love and did not trust the feminine sex and would be likely to be found where there were no ladies.

Remembering about the homesteaders, she suddenly decided to take a train south to the Everglades and some hours later she was passing along the scenic east coast of Florida. At every stop the finger pointed and invited her to ask Mr. Poster.

Reaching Miami she settled herself for a few days' stay and went out, after a few hours' rest, to find a way into the Everglades. Mr. Poster seemed to her as a kind of fake, but she turned to him, since answering questions for stray tourists was his business.

Yes, Mr. Poster knew this anyway; she could reach what was the outskirts of the Everglades by taking the boat up the river. Afternoon trip, one dollar; boat left in thirty minutes.

She followed the point of the finger to the dock, not because she believed what the seer had said, but because the finger was there and she might as well follow it as to follow her own nose, and apparently she had no other guide than either.

WHEN the boat docked at the end of the trip there was a high scaffold to climb with steps that wound around and around like Mary Roberts Rinehart's circular staircase. There was to be seen from the top a jungle of live oaks laden with Spanish moss, interspersed with palmettos and cocoanut palms. Here and there was an open space for which Nature had substituted saw-grass for the trees and thus concealed the underlying water.

Away to the northeast Eleanor could see a sign, something white painted upon black.

"How long," she asked the boatman, "will we stay?"

"About two hours, ma'am."

All the passengers were exploring, so Eleanor set off briskly to the northeast to investigate the sign. It was the finger pointing, this time, to the Indian reservation.

With quick decision she walked along the trail, now admitting openly to herself and the jungle that she was following the point of a finger. Soon she began to chide the finger for not telling her how far she would have to go. At a fork in the trail she was compelled to trust her nose, as there was no finger there.

So interested was she that she failed to remember that the sun was falling after its usual manner, very swiftly. When the dimness of the woods impressed this upon her she turned back.

A thought of the boat's returning sent her scurrying thru the trees. A spring stepped out in front of her—it seemed to have bubbled forth since she had passed that spot a half hour before.

She gathered her skirts about her and ran with all her might, only to find that the trail she was on had collided with a huge oak and seemed never to have recovered from its injuries.

It was nearly dark when the boat whistled a warning of departure and Eleanor had no idea where the river was nor how to find it.

Listening for a second whistle of the boat, something rattled at her feet like a baby's rubber toy and Eleanor moved. A bit of low-hanging moss dropped to her shoulder and she flung it viciously from her. An owl asked her identity and she ignored him. A cricket composed discords on his Nature-provided violin. Everything was intensely alive, including Eleanor.

As the darkness deepened, her tortured nerves drove her somewhere, so she went in search of a patch of moonlight with its accompanying protection.

Thru the gloom she saw an upstanding post that could not have been placed there by Nature. Dimly she could see that there was a black signboard with something white gleaming against it. Climbing a small piece of stump she strained her eyes to see.

There was the finger pointing: "This way to the spring."

If this were a desert, a spring might mean help, but in a Florida jungle at night time, when every path led nowhere, a spring would be no succor, because at night a spring would be used by every wild thing that thirsted. Surely, tho, that board with the pointing finger was not put there to direct wild cats and prowling bears.

Could that strange sound be any animal? She stood still and breathless, listening. Four key notes, distinct and round; a triplet of higher notes and back to the key note; then a variation, and back again to the starting point.

Eleanor thought of Gabriel blowing the Reveille on his trumpet, so imperative was the call. Clear and firm, it rose again. No creature of the jungle was calling—it was a voice!

A little closer and she heard voices in conversation.

"I think I hear the bushes stir," a beautiful contralto voice warned.

"It was a mother doe, dear heart. She answers the tone of your love call. Once more, then—sing it again."

Eleanor knew, somehow, that a kiss followed. Then came the low even call again. It was probably composed for a flute.

"And then——" the male voice spoke as if this had all been gone over many times before, "the maiden came out to him."

"Yes, my mother came out to him. She was a princess born and he was only a brave named Four-Fingers, because he had put four fingers upon the right hand of him. And he took her away in the night time and they came not back any more, and me he called his little Lost-Finger."

"I must take you away if you and I are to part no more. I must take you away at night time."

"Oh, not away——" Eleanor knew by certain little sounds that the maiden's lips were not free for speech. "We could live on the banks of the great waters and listen at night to the sound of it while I sit as now in your arms."

"I am but a brave, dear heart. They would not let me have you, my little Lost-Finger. They have named you just right. You are a part of me—my little Lost-Finger. I have been most unhappy," he went on, dropping easily into her manner of speech. "I was following a false trail that would lead to loneliness. You will point the way to happiness and I will follow you there, my little Lost-Finger."

"You say to me like a great talker."

DURING all this Eleanor was thinking fast. The male voice was vibrant with passion; strange, yet familiar; like a newly discovered tone on an old keyboard. It was as if her subconscious mind were tapping into her consciousness something different than what her ears registered—something false and cynical about the uselessness of effort, the falsity of love, and the greatness of money. All these came to her memory without the aid of her hearing.

With the irrevelance of fast thinking, she remembered that she ought to reveal herself, that this was not fair even to a couple of Indians in a Florida jungle. But her sense of fairness was lost in the effort of her ears to recall the sound of a voice.

"Not so close, my king, you make my sides to ache."

"But my little princess, I have you so little to my heart. Listen, they are coming for you now."

Distantly, Eleanor heard the howl of a dog and knew that the lovers were alert. She feared that in the darkness they might elude her and leave her again alone.

Opening her lips to call she was interrupted by the male voice: "Tomorrow night we must go. You hear me? Tomorrow—tomorrow night!" The male voice was less vibrant with love, more pregnant with command—and much more familiar.

The dog howled closer. Eleanor knew in some manner that the maiden had disappeared in a thicket. In the same manner she felt the other figure approaching her, which forestalled the necessity of her calling.

"Get down, you brute!" he commanded the dog and now the voice was perfectly familiar.

As its owner passed near, she called low, so as not to startle him, "Mountford! Mountford!"

Then, forgetting all the perils that had so lately beset her and remembering all the stings inflicted by that voice, she said with much triumph, "Oh, Mountford, there is no such thing as love!"

When Mountford was trying to believe his ears, she added most maliciously and with Mountford's own manner, "R. S. V. P."

* * * * * * * *

Well, I find upon examination that I have not in any way settled this warlike dissension, there having been no treaty of peace or anything of the kind; but you will have to admit that I have so entirely disarmed one of the combatants that he will be compelled to sign a treaty of peace or something of the kind—in a county clerk's office, later on.

A Beggar's Business Methods.

"LORD NORTHCLIFFE," said a London correspondent, "brought back from his recent visit to Seville a number of stories about the Andalusian beggar.

"There was one story about a beggar in Malaga. This chap's post was on the steps of the cathedral, and there was a rich oil dealer—the Spaniards are very charitable and very devout, you know—who on his daily visits to mass would give the beggar a peseta.

"Well, it happened that the Spaniard got the flu, and didn't show up at the cathedral for a fortnight. When he finally turned in at the cathedral gate one afternoon and put his customary peseta in the ragged cap stretched out to him, the beggar said with a rather frosty smile:

"'Pardon me, senor, but you forget our little account, I think.'

"'Account? What account?' said the oil merchant.

"The beggar gave him a reproachful look.

"'Senor,' he said, 'haven't you been away from the cathedral for two full weeks?'

"'Yes. I've been ill. I had the flu.'

"'And wasn't it your custom to give me a peseta a day?'

"'Yes, but—'

"'Then, senor, you owe me 14 pesetas.'

"'Right. Quite right,' murmured the other beggars crowded on the steps. 'Juan is right, senor.'

"'You rascal,' said the oil dealer, 'do you think I am paying you a salary?'

A murmur of disgust rose from the other beggars, and the dealer's own beggar drew himself up to his full height.

"'Senor,' he said, 'if you have no more honor than that, you can go and get another beggar. For my part, I am done with you for good.'"

He Couldn't Forget Business.

THERE was no sentiment about Herbert Jones. He met the girl he wished to marry; and he proposed like this:

"Mary Dugh, will you be my life partner? I am a business man. If you are agreeable, I will draw up a marriage contract, we'll both sign, before witnesses, and then we can go on with the world's work."

She gasped, but presently regained her composure.

"Fortunately," she said, "I've had a little business training myself, so we can discuss this proposed contract properly and dispassionately."

"I'm so glad to find you so sensible," he told her.

She smiled sweetly.

"I regret I can give you nothing better than second option," she said.

"What!" he exclaimed.

"I'm afraid I have to inform you I am already engaged—that is to say, the first option is already taken. But a first option does not necessarily mean a closed contract. If you don't want to take a chance on a second option, say so, if you do, I'll drop you a line if I find myself on the matrimonial market again."

"That's cold-blooded," he complained.

"It's business," she averred.

"I'd rather have first option," he pleaded.

"A first option in such a case never has been, and never will be, secured by business methods," she replied.

The Titian of Tzintzuntzan.

(Continued From Page 9.)

pered in his ear, "For a priest? Have you been fooling me?"

"Not I. You still have your picture, have you not. No, not for a priest, I pledge you," Van Law whispered back. Aloud he said:

"If you wish, Senor, you may take your daughter and her maid aboard and make them comfortable as is possible on that little shell. I will wait here."

AT THE word maid, Governor Del Valle stepped to where he could, with small attempt at concealment, peer at the woman. Apparently he was satisfied. Van Law, the vision of despair he had seen thru the window still in his eyes, found the executive's suspicion almost amusing. Did he think an attempt was being made to smuggle Senorita Moreau away with them? Evidently the Governor entertained that idea, if at all, for only a minute for he fell to pacing the pier again, restlessly. His quick abandonment of investigation led to a conviction in the Captain's mind that Del Valle, also, had seen or heard of that vision thru the window. Probably the auto driver had seen it and conveyed the information to his master.

The two women, mutely accepting the situation, seated themselves on their luggage. Cordova, a picture of irresolution, stood a little apart trying, it seemed, to analyze the occasion; Del Valle moved ceaselessly back and forth, working himself into a passion at the delay; Van Law stoically sat with crossed legs, awaiting what the half hour he had allotted himself might bring. At its end, he had concluded, he would make excuses and openly start the Cordovas off, if such a thing were possible.

Considering the possible developments which would follow such a move; Del Valle's rage, his own probable detention behind bars, Van Law was oblivious to what was happening around him. His eyes were half-closed, he presented a picture of patience on a pile.

A guttural cry of dismay recalled him to the more immediate present; a splash and women's screams. The Captain sprang to his feet. Del Valle was running to the edge of the wharf. The Cordova senorita and her maid were locked in a frightened embrace; no sign of the former bandit was visible. But from the water below mighty splashings told where he must be.

Van Law threw off his service overcoat and struggled with the riding boots he wore. The excited Spanish cries of the women told something of what had happened; "He was pushed off!"

The splashings below told more. They were never made by one man's struggles, nonswimmer tho he might be. A mighty battle was raging down there in the water. Himself a fearless swimmer, Captain Van Law plunged in. It was not time to reason why, he simply felt a responsibility for that old, retired cutthroat whom he knew could not long survive in such a combat.

Van Law's clean-cut dive and subsequent appearance on the surface were signal of a cessation of the fight in the water. While Cordova uttered weak cries for help and sank beneath the water, his assailant, whoever he might be, swam off with strong strokes beneath the pier. The Captain reached the bandit as he came up again; with practiced hand seized him from behind and navigated him until a rope of salvation was thrown from the launch close by.

Cordova was not a man fitted by recent manner of life to shine in an aquatic contest. He was, when drawn up on the boat, as nearly drowned as it is possible for a man to be and yet live. In the work of resuscitation which he directed, Van Law incidentally treated himself in the best manner possible, the exercise driving out the cold of the sudden plunge. He was aware of a woman helping him, it was the servant who had come with them. Carmelita hovered anxiously about, the crew of the little boat lent assistance. But when he had time to note anything, the Captain discovered that Del Valle had disappeared from the group.

Filled with nervous foreboding, he rushed up the ladder to the pier. Del Valle's machine was nowhere in sight. In his hurry the Captain stumbled over something which gave out a metallic sound and, stooping, he picked up the case in which he had placed the priceless Titian. Cordova must have dropped it as he was assaulted and the masterpiece had lain here unnoted thru all the excitement. The seals were still unbroken.

In the distance hovered another of the broken-down flivver-taxis of the town. Van Law summoned it and had the still unconscious, tho now breathing, Cordova placed gently on the back seat. He must see what had become of Del Valle. Already he could picture the Governor, seeing his plan of driving out the Cordovas failing, rushing to their home to arrive before their return and take advantage of his carefully laid plans.

Hurrying the two women into the machine and climbing on the side himself, the Captain extracted all possible speed from the mechanical wreck by promises of lavish rewards to the driver. The car dashed up beside the white abode in a few short minutes.

To the Captain's relief there was no sign of Del Valle's machine in the vicinity. Van Law saw to it that the stop was made at a point where he could take one more look thru the window which had so shaken him by its revelation of despair.

The candle still burned within the room, the girl still lay in the same position, rich Titian-head pillowed on her arm, face hid in the tresses, the entire attitude symbolic of hopelessness. A sickening fear seized the man. Could Guadalupe, feeling herself abandoned, have taken the means of escape which many another woman has adopted, facing lesser odds than she seemed to?

But he had no time to investigate now. Carmelita was crying piteously for his help, the driver and servant were trying to lift the large, inert form of the bandit. He turned to help them carry Cordova into the house and to his own bedroom. Plainly the man was in need of immediate attention. He sent the driver hot-haste to summon a physician whose sign he had seen in the town.

CHAPTER XVI.

DEL VALLE A PRISONER.

CORDOVA was carried to what appeared to be his own chamber, a room that by its comfort astonished Captain Van Law, accustomed to associating the former highwayman with scenes of rough crime and Mexican battle. Upon a wide American bed the man was laid and the Captain, with practiced hands, began gently to disrobe him, removing his still wet garments.

The former bandit was slowly coming back to consciousness, but his murmurings were more like delirium than rational speech, and they were couched in English, a language which Van Law had not even suspected the man of understanding, much less of speaking. He babbled of the "d—n government;" once he uprose on the bed to shout "They're squeezing me;" more than once an incomparable mixture of English and Mexican-Spanish would be interrupted by the plaintive inquiry, "Where's Gertie?"

Carmelita's servant proved a tower of strength in helping the Captain quiet the raving man. She had removed her voluminous outer garments and the veil which hid her face. There was something uncannily familiar about that countenance, as Van Law discerned it in the dim light. She was not the Maria who had admitted him several times. This woman was years younger and more active. Her features, despite their extreme duskiness, were refined, her eyes were not nearly so dark as the average peon's. She worked with a compelling sureness, her touch had greater potency to sooth the fevered man than had the Captain's.

It was the servant who discovered, with a little, suppressed exclamation of horror that which had escaped the attention of them all in the excitement, and which accounted for Cordova's failure to react after his watery plunge. The man had been stabbed in the back, a deep wound which apparently penetrated the right lung.

The servant issued sharp orders in Spanish to her mistress, Carmelita, who hung about uncertain how to be of assistance, and with the clothes which were brought her wrapped the wound. Something seemed to interfere with the woman's work, and with an exclamation of impatience she placed her hand on her hair, to snatch off and throw across the room a black wig. Red hair, a huge mass of it wound tightly about her head, seemed to blaze up like a new illumination in the room. Captain Van Law knew the cause of that sense of familiarity in Miss Carmelita's servant. The disguise of the painted face was dispelled.

The American made no sign of surprise. A hurt pride at not having been trusted with this secret perhaps encouraging him to pretense that he had known it all along. But busy as he was, his mind reverted continually to that vision of despair he had beheld thru the little barred window and he seized the first opportunity after Cordova had finally been laid in his bed, to slip away. Before he went, he turned naturally to Senorita Moreau to say:

"I sent for the physician. You better remove your disguise before he comes."

"He will not come," the girl answered, with dull finality in her voice.

"Why not?" Van Law exhibited real surprise.

"Do you suppose the man that was responsible for this would let him answer a call from this house?" She was finely scornful.

"You mean Del Valle did this?" The attack upon Cordova had been a mystery to the Captain; he had not seen it, his first intimation being the splash in the water and the screams of the women. As he recalled now, the Governor had been missing when he finally got the victim to safety.

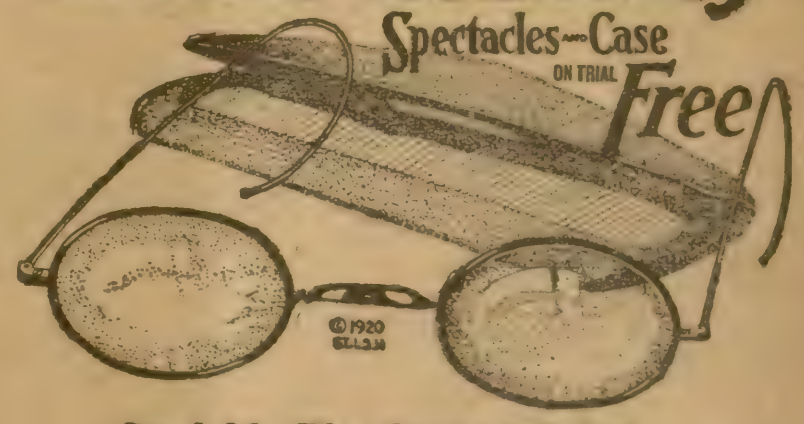
"Not himself. But who else could be responsible?" She dismissed the subject dully.

Van Law, made familiar with this bewildering Cordova house only in segments, had but a general sense of direction to guide him to the room where burned that light that had revealed so despairing a scene to his susceptible soul upon his departure, but he felt that he had placed his hand lightly upon the right door. It swung open to his touch.

Within the candle still burned and the man almost stepped back in fright at the vision, again, of the red-head pillowed upon the white arm, the posture attitude of the creature he saw in the far corner upon the couch. Had it not been that he had just left this girl in another room he would have rushed to the couch in anxiety, sure that here was discovered a case of suicide, for the position of the figure had not altered

Send No Money

Spectacles—Case ON TRIAL Free



Send Me The Coupon Below You'll Get Them At Once

THIS is a straight-from-the-shoulder proposition that every man and woman should take advantage of right this very minute.

I am putting on the market a Spectacle that can't be beat, and I am going to prove it to you. NO! better still, I am going to let you be the judge and prove it to yourself without costing you a cent, so let you and I get together on this proposition.

Answer me this simple question: If you needed a horse, a dog, or a cow, and a man came to you and said I have a good horse I want to trade, and to prove he is a good horse you can try him for a week or ten days, and if you don't care for him, return him to me. Wouldn't you think that square? Or, if your wife was offered a stove or some other article that she needed, with the full understanding that there wasn't a cent to pay; she could just use it for ten days, and then if she was not perfectly satisfied, all she had to do was return it. Wouldn't you consider that honest and square, and wouldn't you grab it? You bet you would, and I don't blame you. Now to get back to my spectacle proposition. This is exactly what I am going to do.

You Must Not Send Me One Penny

I am going to send you a pair of my 10-Karat Gold-Filled "Perfect Vision" large size spectacles complete in a handsome velteen-lined pocketbook spectacle-case for you to use fully ten days without it costing you a cent, and we don't even want a reference.

As soon as you get them I want you to see how easily you will be able to read the finest print, thread the smallest-eyed needle, even in your sewing machine, and sew by day or night without any eye pain or eye strain, and with as much ease and comfort as you ever did in your younger days.

They Will Enable You To Read The Finest Print Or Shoot A Bird Off Of A Tree

IF YOU ARE A SPORTSMAN
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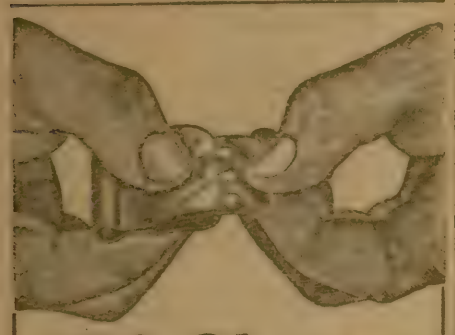

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since his first vision of it, probably two hours earlier.

But with the cooling sense that something was wrong here, with the mortal certainty that the Senorita Moreau was very much alive in the room of Senor Cordova, ministering to that stricken man, Captain Van Law approached the creature on the bed cautiously, by a round-about route.

The one candle was set on a low stand a little in front of and at the head of the couch and when Van Law had passed its clever placing, he discovered that it was no creature of flesh and blood that he saw, nor even one of human dimensions. Here was but a painted girl.

A canvas had been set up on the center of the couch, a canvas upon which was painted the vision of red-hair and white arm, of retreating shoulders which disappeared into shadows of the exact tone of dark wall and dark couch. The single light had been so set that it would cast its beams upon the creature of paint and help blend the shadows of the background. Only by an oblique sight was the ruse to be detected and such a viewpoint was impossible from the one window on the outside of the house.

For whom had this trap been placed? To deceive the Captain or some one else? Perhaps both. It had removed from his own mind all suspicion of Carmelita's servant. Del Valle, likewise, had quickly been freed of the same suspicions of that servant. Van Law recalled the little scene on the wharf, the Governor momentarily wondering who this second woman was and then dismissing the subject as unworthy of notice. Del Valle, too, must have looked thru that window before he went to the wharf. Probably what he had seen had accounted for his hurried disappearance after the attempted drowning.

The Governor must have seen in Van Law's rescue of the ex-bandit the disruption of his careful plans, which it now appeared had included permanent disposal of Cordova, turning over of his daughter to the American's protection and the Governor's own leisurely wooing of the Titian-haired girl left behind. Balked in that scheme, the Captain reflected, Del Valle had probably hurried here to try to take advantage of the temporarily unprotected condition of Senorita Moreau. The return of the party might have routed him before he, too, learned of the painted deception. Where was the man now?

As if in subconscious answer to that unput question, Van Law suddenly whirled, a chilling sense of danger gripping his heart. He was just in time to jump nimbly aside as a figure with upraised knife sprang toward him.

The American was a clever wrestler, but he found his every power taxed as he struggled, silently, in the dim-lighted room with this assailant, for he must devote one arm to control of that hand which still grasped the dirk he had so luckily avoided. Over and over, about the center of the floor, the pair rolled, soft grunts of exertion the only noise from the conflict.

Several times Van Law felt himself cut lightly on the surface of hand or neck with that swaying knife; occasionally its point dug thru his clothes but only for superficial scratches. But finally the twist which he was bringing to bear upon the hand holding it forced a releasing of the fingers and the weapon fell with a little clatter that was the loudest sound of his deadly fight.

With two arms to devote entirely to subduing his opponent, that end was soon achieved by the Captain. He sank his freed fingers deep into a soft neck and felt pour thru him a fierce sense of joy as the creature melted from combatant muscle to inert human clay in his arms. He had choked the man into insensibility.

A DAINTY washstand at the side of this room which had so nearly become a shambles furnished the Captain with towels with which to tie up his assailant. In the leisurely accomplishment of that Van Law had opportunity to identify the man. Instead of the priest, whose sinister presence he had seemed to feel frequently in the last few days and whom he had suspected he was fighting with, he discovered that it was Governor Del Valle himself that had been overcome.

He was a sadly disheveled Governor, a bloody sight from surface cuts unintentionally inflicted upon himself in the course of the battle, half his dainty mustache literally torn out, his clothes in rags.

Involuntarily the Captain looked at the only witness to this battle. The Titian-head still rested unheedingly upon the white arm, the figure had not changed its position. Tho he knew now the secret of the painted girl, Van Law could not suppress a shudder that murder was very nearly done here for the sake of that inanimate creature. As much to relieve himself as to revive the Governor, he threw the contents of the water jug in the latter's face, a little at a time.

Sputteringly, Del Valle regained consciousness to stare, after he began breathing normally, in malignant hatred at the man who had vanquished him. In an instant his eyes, too, strayed to the couch, to look in wide-eyed astonishment at the unmoved figure he saw there, while his body stiffened in the horror he felt that such a conflict should have left that creature on the couch unmoved.

Himself informed, Van Law could almost see the working of the Mexican's mind, his evident arrival at the conclusion that he viewed a suicide and his horror over the revelation. His head sank to his breast.

It was plain that the American had been the first to discover the ruse which Senorita Moreau had with her skilful brushes and clever mind played upon those who might choose to look thru her window. The Captain was quick to put the present situation to use in further humbling the official.

"You killed her," he accused.

"No, no!" the man's reply came almost in a wail. "I would not kill her, I love her. I am wild about her, I want her for my own—and she is dead." Something like a sob shook his frame. "I would kill all the rest of the world to have her—and she is dead."

The room was silent for a minute, the Mexican's head still bowed. When he looked up it was with flashing, accusing eyes.

"It was you who killed her, you pig. I caught you here, I would have killed you if I had could, but I did not know then that she was dead. Now I will have you killed a dozen times. By horrible torture I will kill you many times before I allow you to die."

"You will need better luck than you had with Cordova; you did not succeed in making way with him," the Captain answered. Despite the seriousness of things in general with him, this particular situation was not without its humor.

"I did not try to kill him." Hate this Mexican tho he did, the Captain could not deny that the simple statement was convincing. After a short pause Del Valle continued:

"I do not expect you to believe that, but I never saw the man who attacked Cordova until he appeared like a ghost over the side of the pier from below and jumped on him. But you killed this most beautiful of women, you cursed devil! You shall pay for that. Wait until my men can seize you. Ah, how I shall make you pay!"

Out of his frenzy of grief or anger, whichever it might be, Del Valle appeared to derive full measure of anticipatory revenge. The American silenced him with:

"It may be a long wait, my man. Don't forget you are a prowler captured in another's house at night. Under your own laws your killing here in defense of this home is justifiable. How do you prefer I perform the deed?"

"You would not dare." It was rather a pitiful attempt at bravado. The Governor's figure shook visibly. He knew what one of his fellow countrymen would do to him in a like situation and what he would himself do with positions reversed. If the American were serious things indeed looked bad for the Governor of Lower California.

"Why did you come here at all? What did you expect to do?" the Captain demanded.

"I suppose, of course, you go north with your launch. I see those women working over Cordova and I think I summon Senorita Moreau to assist them. But I am stopped before I get here and am told that the launch has gone on, so I come to tell that you have left and to offer to be of assistance." Del Valle forgot for a moment his perfect English.

"The launch went out?" This, if true, was a most unwelcome bit of news. Already Van Law's mind was busy with plans for holding the boat under charter until Cordova could be moved and then taking this strange family where it would be free from the plotting of this deceitful executive.

"With the other American who come here yesterday, I am told. I am glad he is gone. He cannot interfere when I revenge her death upon you." Del Valle's lips curled derisively.

"That revenge will be a long time coming. Do not forget you are my prisoner, not I yours."

Van Law's heart was not in the words, he had lost his zest for the momentary joke of letting this man think a real flesh and blood woman was dead. So Holliday was gone. Undoubtedly Del Valle had told the truth about that, there would be no occasion for a lie. Holliday had abandoned him. More than probably that tin case, laying so carelessly on the wharf, was a substitute. Holliday had provided the original; what more likely than that he had taken the precaution of bringing along a substitude for some such development; the man had thought of so many details. Van Law experienced an overpowering impatience to look in that tin receptacle which he had carelessly tossed into a corner of the living-room.

Uncermoniously, he seized Governor Del Valle by both the latter's bound feet and hauled him across the room as if he were a sack of meal. Tapestry hung on the wall; the Captain's suspicion that it veiled a door to the hidden studio proved correct and he found the door unlocked. A faint radiance from the mooplit sky above penetrated thru the skylight. Into the room he dragged the Governor, adjusted a gag that would

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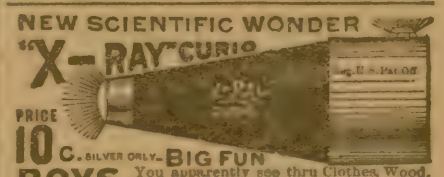

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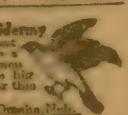

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prevent cries of distress and calmly left the executive of the province to his own bitter thoughts.

CHAPTER XVII.
UNDER ARREST.

IT WAS a night of resentment and foreboding for Captain Van Law. He passed most of it upon a couch in the Cordova living-room, with occasional trips to the room of the still delirious ex-bandit, beside whose bed thruout the night the Senorita Moreau sat. She had left there but once, to remove the dark grease paint which she had used in assuming her disguise. Words could not serve to move her from her post. Frequently Senorita Carmelita sat beside her, pleading in a low voice to be allowed to take up the watch, but always the red-haired woman, seeming in the dim light little more mature than the girl, refused.

The Captain could not but admire the devotion of Guadalupe Moreau to the man whom this Mexican world sneeringly referred as "her friend." He had never been able, in spite of apparently positive evidence, to convince himself that she was not at heart an entirely pure creature, and her devotion now to the rapidly sinking former brigand caused him to tell himself that no matter what she might have been she was proving herself a real heroine. Fiercely he told the voice of caution from within him that protested he was a fool to mix his own affairs with those of this household, that he was glad to risk anything to serve two such worthy girls as these.

Governor Del Valle, still a prisoner in that hidden studio, presented a real problem. In holding the man here Van Law realized he was adding seriously to the prospects of future trouble not only for himself but also for those he was seeking to help. But, on the other hand, to release Del Valle would be to invite the inevitable trouble at a moment when he was least able to cope with it. In the dilemma he saw nothing for it but to continue to keep the Governor where he would do the least harm, as a prisoner.

Much as both these matters concerned him, it was another which made sleep impossible for Captain Van Law. He had broken the seal of the receptacle and opened it. The Titian was not within.

A sense of betrayal, of having been made a dupe by a clever intriguer, aroused resentment too deep even for weariness to overcome. Holliday had, he bitterly reflected, used him as a cat's-paw all thru this strange affair, and now had deserted him at the last minute, when the man had the booty in his hands; had gone in the boat in which Van Law himself was to have left. It was not even before the range of possibilities, it seemed to the angry Captain, that Holliday was responsible for the attack upon Cordova, to create a diversion at the psychological moment.

It was well after daylight had begun to peep in thru the windows opening on the patio that Carmelita came softly into the living-room and seeing the American's wide-open eyes upon her, approached him:

"Who is it you have in the studio?" she asked.

"Governor Del Valle," the Captain replied. It was useless to be evasive with her, even if evasion would have served any purpose. "You heard our fight."

He had given no explanation of the considerable marks he bore of that encounter in knife scratches on his neck and hands, but now he had an unanalyzed desire to account for them.

"Yes, but we were so busy with father. Guadalupe wanted to go help you, but I told her you could manage it yourself."

Van Law could fairly feel himself blushing. Was this girl joking him, even at this serious moment? He suddenly wandered why it was that while nearly all his thoughts were of the other, the red-haired one, it was only this dark-eyed creature before whom he became an almost inarticulate, credulous, flattered male person. Her words rang with sincerity, but in his mind, made acute by a night of suspicions, persisted the question of her real attitude until she asked, with an assumption that whatever he did was right:

"What are you going to do with him?"

"I have not decided," he answered.

"Will you kill him yourself?"

She was very matter-of-fact. Van Law found himself inwardly gasping at the commonplace manner in which she put the question.

"You think I should?" she asked.

"Didn't he try to kill father and make you risk your life jumping into the water to save him? But it rests with you. Guadalupe and I talked it over. She wanted to take a hand, but I told her whatever you did would be all right and we must not interfere."

"He swore to me he did not attack your father. Did you see him?"

"Oh, no, of couse it was not him in person. He had one of his horrid, irreligious fake priests do it. A huge big fellow. I saw hm come up over the side of the wharf."

Here was food for thought. So it was that man of the ready cash who had wrecked Van Law's carefully laid plans. He had disappeared, probably with Holliday and the Titian. From outspoken reproaches of his principal. Van Law fell into unpleasant contemplation of what might have happened to the art connoisseur. Cordova had been holding that tin receptacle with the painting inside, when he was attacked. With their already demonstrated powers in window-peering and eavesdropping, what more like than that the priests from Tzintzuntzan knew that it contained the precious painting they sought?

They might even have learned of Van Law's plan with Holliday to use their money not entirely to their advantage and have chosen this means of thwarting the scheme. The substitution of tin cases was easily to be accounted for, if they held Holliday. It might not even be a substitution; they might merely have removed the painting and forced Holliday, who undoubtedly had more of the seals with which he had provided the Captain, to refasten the cover.

"Don't you think it must have been that devil Del Valle?" The soft voice of Carmelita with her question roused the American.

"It may have been. We'll keep him until we are sure he can't harm us any more," he returned. He hoped that "we" gave the girl as much comfort in the hearing as it did him pleasure in its uttering.

"You know he will be missed."

Her practical statement was like a dash of cold water upon Van Law's alternately elated and troubled mind. Of course, the Governor of the province would be missed and even stupid Mexicans could not be long it tracing him to this house

"DID I cover the door bell," he asked.

The girl nodded affirmatively. "It will not hurt his excellency to go without his breakfast. It occurs to me that if he is missed, I may be asked to go to headquarters to explain the absence of my dear friend, Governor Del Valle. If I am detained too long, can you feed him?"

The girl smiled faintly. "It will be a pleasure," she said and Van Law knew those meals would not be exactly a pleasure to the ruler of Lower California. But Carmelita dissipated the temporary trace of levity. Coming over to the Captain she stood close before him and said:

"He will not be found here and he will be a hostage for you. If they attempt to treat you roughly or to—to make threats, hang your handkerchief out of the prison window. We will see that this villain sends a message quick enough that will stop them."

Her calm acceptance of the certainty that he was doomed to unpleasant sessions with Mexican authorities almost overcame the comfort the girl so plainly intended her words to convey.

"I'll remember," Van Law replied, gruffly trying to conceal the emotion this spirited defense aroused. To hide it he turned away and stood on tiptoe, looking out the high, small window toward the roadway.

Up the road straggled a little group of men, resembling in no country but this soldiers of the government. At their head was the same lieutenant who had previously arrested Captain Van Law.

"You are a good little prophet, girlie," he said in mock gaiety. "Run and make sure the Governor is still gagged so he cannot make a sound and that the door is hidden. Our expected guests are about to arrive.

Carmelita ran to do his bidding and Van Law himself admitted the Mexican officer. The man was polite to the point of suspicion; such an attitude, in contrast to the brusqueness he had previously shown toward the American indicated a doubt of the wisdom of his errand or a certainty of its success.

He begged the pardon of el Capitan and the world in general, but might he please speak to Governor Del Valle, for whom he had an important message? El Capitan regretted that he could not help in the delivery of this message, but el Gobernado was not here, he had not seen him since the night before at the waterfront.

Ah, that was quite possible as far as the Americano was concerned, but was it not probable that the Governor might be in the house unknown to el Capitan. Such a thing was highly improbable, but if el Lieutenant thought it possible would he not enter and make search himself. El Lieutenant regretted taking such action, an intrusion upon the privacy of this family, but alas, el Capitan, being an officer himself, realized the disagreeable requirements which duty frequently makes upon one.

Tho similar polite expressions embroidered the search of the house, it was nevertheless a most thoro examination which the Mexican officer made of the premises, even penetrating to the room of the sick man. Toward its end his politeness began vaguely to fade away and at its conclusion he had practically substituted threats for soft words, in informing the American Captain that it would be necessary for him to come to the Governor's palace to be interrogated by higher officials.

The promptness with which Van Law agreed rather took the wind out of the Mexican's sail upon his new tack and the Captain was not submitted to the previcus indignity of being surrounded, as he went away with the odd squad of soldiers.

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one-floored adobe style which prevailed thruout the remainder of the town. From the second-story window of the office of the jefe politico one looked out across a walled inclosure, over the scattering red roofs of the little town to the deep blue of the small bay, where here and there floated a white fishing boat which added to the pleasant picture even tho one knew of a certainty that upon closer approach the boat would prove to be anything but white.

But little notice of the charming scene did Captain Arthur Van Law take, tho he looked often from the window. The glances were impelled merely as they became advantageous in conveying an idea of boredom with the conversation in progress, which was often. For Captain Van Law was playing the great American game of verbal poker, with a considerable stake upon the table.

In the absence of Governor Del Valle, which was a mystery that even moved the Mexicans from their customary lassitude, the Captain had been taken before Senor Quiroz, the jefe politico, or mayor. And in Senor Quiroz the Captain encountered the man whose outpourings he had so vigorously stopped in the restaurant encounter.

Sinister satisfaction was writ large upon the Quiroz features thruout the examination of the American, who was taxed in manners direct and indirect, with responsibility for the disappearance of the province's Governor. Yet thruout the quizzing Van Law had a feeling that it was less concern over the disappearance of the higher official than an overmastering desire to "get something" upon the American that was prompting this display of energy. In no way did the Mexican official refer to the episode of the knockout, but at no moment was the remembrance of it absent from the thoughts of either himself or the man he questioned.

Slowly, however, the careful assumption of impartiality, of suaveness, which Senor Quiroz sought to impart to the interview, melted before his anger at the clever jockeying of his victim. His swarthy skin was not sufficiently opaque to conceal the flush mounting beneath it.

Suddenly the Mexican closed the bandying of words with his more astute opponent. Uprising in one of the quick bursts of rage for which his people are famous, or infamous as the viewpoint may be, he shook a threatening fist beneath Captain Van Law's face and demanded:

"Where have you hid him? We know you killed him; you shall be dealt with likewise in a short while. Your only hope is in open confession. I give you two minutes."

With Cordova helpless in bed because of his injuries, the Governor bound and gagged in the ex-bandit's abode; Captain Van Law held under surveillance by the soldiery and Holliday and the "Titian of Tzintzuntzan" both missing—the next and concluding installment should be wildly exciting, for, of course, all their affairs must be settled, one way or the other. Wonder what will become of the two beautiful damsels! Don't you?

Off Half Moon Reefs

Continued From Page 4

that a bum wouldn't hobnob with me——"

"Stop, please!" she interrupted, rising and extending a hand. "You're not that any more, Roger! You're cured! You haven't touched cocaine for a week. You——"

He interrupted her with an unpleasant laugh. "No," he cut in, "not for a week. But once I went without it for two long weeks—on a sea voyage like this—couldn't get the stuff—nearly died—and then, the moment I landed, what d'you think I did, Jane?"

She shook her head, miserably, frightened by his cynical attitude.

"I made straight for the nearest drug store," he said quietly, "and laid in a stock of the stuff." Shrugging his shoulders, he added: "After that I was never without it—and I said I'd never go to sea again."

For a time she was too confused and embarrassed to speak. She was plainly laboring under some great emotion that she could not control. Finally, in a tremendous voice, she said: "Roger, promise me when we land again you will—will—not touch cocaine again, but——"

"I can't make any such promise!" he interrupted harshly. "I won't make it because I couldn't keep t."

Then, regretting the pain his harsh words had caused, he smiled at her, and added: "But forget that! We weren't discussing me. It's Ben and Chic we were talking about. Chic's a human devil, and Ben's weak and half-witted. Chic will make a tool of him for his own purpose. Between them there'll be the devil to pay if we aren't careful. It would be three against seven, not counting the cook, for those ignorant squareheads would follow Chic's orders."

"I don't think so," she replied, smiling. "I don't think there'll be any mutiny. Chic can't stir up any such trouble. He'll bluster and threaten, but Ben and the crew will stand loyally by father."

Roger regarded her with slow, admiring yes, forgetting for a time his own fears and arguments, for the heightened color of her cheeks, laid on in warm patches that made the sun-tanned, olive skin of throat and forehead white in comparison, and the deep violet blue eyes that reflected the sky and water in their depths, made her a picture of rare loveliness. She stood facing him, frankly amused by the fears he had conjured, and unafraid for herself or her father.

Not wishing to break her innocent trust, or give her unnecessary pain, he sighed and drew a long breath. Perhaps after all nothing would happen, and he did not want to spoil the trip for her. Apparently agreeing with her, he nodded and grinned good-naturedly.

"There won't be any hobgoblins to catch us if we're good," he laughed. "And we won't dream of them! That's nearly as bad as meeting them in real flesh and blood."

CHAPTER XIII.

IT TOOK several days, stretching almost into a week, so contrary were the winds, to cover the three hundred-odd miles they had lost in the storm, and when they finally got back on their course, headed straight for the Half Moon Reefs, off the Central American coast, where the Segovia River debouches into the Caribbean, they met a series of half gales that further delayed them.

Captain Holding was plainly worried. Their arrival was long overdue, and the fear the Nicaraguan commander, after cruising around a few days, would conclude there had been a hitch and abandon the search, complicated matters. The Sky Pilot was bound for Rio de Janeiro with her cargo of merchandise, and the Captain was anxious to complete his trip and reload for the return voyage.

He confided his worries to Roger, who sympathized with him, but had no remedy to offer. "We can't hang around the Half Moon Reefs in a storm," Roger said, frowning. "It's a dangerous spot. We'll be between the devil and the deep sea if we get caught there."

Captain Holding nodded. "We ought to pick them up in a few days if this wind holds."

"Yes, we're making good time now."

Roger's anxiety to reach the rendezvous was almost as great as the skipper's. If they could discharge their treasure, the fear of an uprising of the crew under Chic Doby's leadership would be greatly lessened. If he contemplated any such coup, he would not delay much longer.

Roger redoubled his watchfulness, keeping Chic and Ames under constant surveillance. Chic was no sailor, and Ames, while a good mate, was no navigator, and Roger reasoned that the mutiny would be delayed until the reefs were in sight. They might not be able to find them without the aid of the Captain or his new mate.

This conclusion brought a measure of relief to Roger. There was nothing to worry about until the Half Moon Reefs were sighted. After that he would have to be on deck every minute of the day and night, and he and Captain Holding would be prepared for any eventuality. They armed themselves, and waited.

But Roger had his own troubles that no one else sensed, unless perhaps Jane, who, thru her womanly perception, visualized things hidden from the human eye. Often thru the long nights, either on deck or while tossing on his cot, he suffered the tortures of Gehenna. The insatiable craze for the drug that had gained such a mastery over him paralyzed his will and made him weak and vascillating. Instead of lessening in intensity by time, it seemed to increase.

Weak and spent after each struggle with his appetite, he became discouraged and despondent. Thoughts of suicide as the surest way of relief flickered thru his mind. Raving under these spells of moral obliquity, he rather welcomed the expectation of mutiny. In the inevitable conflict, accident might perform for him what his mind conceived in cold-blooded deliberation.

It made him more restless and truculent. He went out of his way to be exacting and offensive. The slightest infraction of rules aroused him to a pitch of fury; a look or expression from Ames or Chic made him angry or sarcastic. His tongue became a weapon to lash the others into open rebellion.

The apparent meekness and docility of the crew instead of pleasing irritated him. They were all stupid, humble, time-serving slaves. They didn't dare rebel against conditions that to a self-respecting American should be intolerable. Mutiny! Faugh! They didn't have the backbone of a jelly-fish. Even Chic and Ames were terrified into passive submission. They were afraid of him—afraid he would deal out to them again some of the medicine he had once administered.

Laboring under this delusion, he strutted about with a chip on his shoulder, and as a natural result of meeting no opposition he grew careless, relaxing some of his vigilance. There was to be no mutiny, after all, and all his fears had been wasted energy. Jane was right. Ames and the crew were loyal to their Captain, and Chic, if he so desired, had no power to whip or bribe them into rebellion.

Chic Doby was an arrogant bluffer—a bully without the will or courage to carry out his evil intentions. Captain Holding had been intimidated by him, and Chic had employed the familiar tactics of a blusterer to terrorize one who took him seriously. Roger smiled cynically; he was not so easily deceived; he knew men, and was capable of handling the roughest.

Late one evening they picked up the Cazonnes, or Hobbies, those flat, low-lying cays that dot the sea sixty miles off the coast of Honduras. Roger recognized them as old friends even before Captain Holding had made them out in the dusk of the early evening. Gazing at them, the latter sighed with relief.

"We'll pick up the Reefs by morning. They're not a hundred miles away on a straight course."

"We'll do it before daylight," smiled Roger. Turning to Ames he added: "Ever see the reefs at low tide, Ben?"

Ames nodded briefly. He had made the trip a number of times in the Sky Pilot.

With the Gorda banks on their port and the low-lying cays on their starboard, they began the perilous run thru water that had engulfed many a vessel, steering a straight course for the famous reefs. Roger watched the phosphorescence of the sea trailing behind them until shortly past midnight, and then walked forward for a brief inspection before taking a few hours of rest.

The dim outline of the man on watch loomed up ahead. He stood a moment, with folded arms, in the shadow of the forward truck, resting his body lightly against it. The restless swish of the waters lapping the sides of the bow came in gentle lullabys. The stiff breeze blowing across the stern cooled his forehead and brought refreshing relief after the intolerable heat of the day. It was a calm moonlight night, a wondrous picture of indolent peace and content.

A gentle noise back of him caused Roger to turn. As he did so two forms leaped out of the darkness like phantoms of the night. He raised a hand to protect himself, and then, finding it too late, his lips formed themselves for a warning cry; but the attack came so swiftly and silently that Nature could do no better than permit a grunt, and then a long-drawn, heaving sigh, as he slumped to the deck. A well-directed blow on the head had toppled him over like a log.

Chic Doby and Ben Ames had planned well. They had attacked him while on the deck alone, with one of their own number at the wheel and another on duty at the bow. Captain Holding and Jane were in the cabin all unconscious of the swift drama going on within a hundred feet of them.

ROGER did not recover consciousness until hours later, not until the moon had ridden across the heavens and had its white light eclipsed by the golden rays of another day's sun. On the hard

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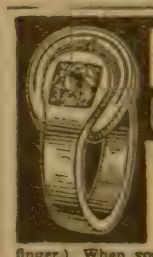

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floor of the crews' quarters forward, he awakened to a realization that all his watchfulness and planning had been futile. In a moment of forgetfulness he had permitted his enemies to creep upon him and deprive him of all power.

"Dammit!" he muttered when he recovered consciousness. "They got me after all!"

He struggled ineffectually to untie the sailor's knot that held him. Something stirred near him. Out of the gloom of the narrow quarters came a voice that startled him.

"Is that you, Roger?" asked Captain Holding mournfully. "I thought they'd finished you. You looked it!"

"No, I got a hard skull," grinned Roger. Then glancing in the direction of the voice, he added: "They got you, too, Cap'n?"

"Yes, they found me asleep in bed. If I'd been awake, I'd killed 'em."

"Did they tap you on the head?"

"No, 'twasn't necessary. They had me half bound before I was awake. I kicked Ben in the stomach and gave him a bellyache, and landed one on Chic's nose; but they were too many for me. They got me!"

Roger tried to wriggle to a more comfortable position. "They took the ship then?" he asked.

"I suppose so. Yes, they're in command."

A terrible thought came into Roger's mind. "Where's Jane?" he cried. "Did they—did they hurt her?"

"I don't know, Roger. If I did I'd feel easier of mind. I told Chic he could kill me if he wouldn't hurt her; but Chic—Chic's a devil. He laughed in my face! Dam him! I could kill him! I'll do it if I ever get free! I've been too easy with him! Now I'll kill him as I would a snake!"

One of the sailors entered at this moment, and the two prisoners watched him in silence. It was Niels, the stupidest of the squareheads, and the newest member of the crew. He had never sailed before in the Sky Pilot. But he was old enough to know sea law.

"Niels," said Captain Holding, "do you know this means life prison for you? The moment we touch port you'll be arrested for mutiny. If you want to save your skin unfasten me. I'll give you a chance."

The sailor shook his head stupidly. "I take orders from Mr. Doby. He say he captain now."

"He's a pirate, Niels, and he'll hang with you!"

Another head was thrust down the companion, and Chic himself appeared, his face wreathed in smiles. "How's the little party?" he chuckled. "Beautiful morning on deck, Cap'n. Too bad you can't enjoy it."

"Where's Jane, Chic? Tell me she's safe, and you can do what you please with me. Kill me, if you want to."

Doby laughed uproariously. "Jane's in good company. Don't have to worry about her."

"Will you let me see her?" pleaded the Captain. "Send her down if only for a minute."

"Sorry to deny you the little pleasure, but she's having a nice time with her lover. She and Ben are on great terms."

An oath escaped the skipper's lips, and with Titantic writhings and twistings he sought to break the bonds that held him; but they were tied by sailors whose knots rarely slipped. Exhausted finally by his efforts, he dropped back, and breathed hoarsely:

"Chic, I'll kill you for this! I'll live to see it! You can't escape me!"

Doby laughed his derision. Suddenly he caught sight of Roger, who had remained perfectly still during the conversation. He perred hard into his face.

"So our young bantam rooster wasn't dead after all. We thought we'd finished him. Tougher than most dope eaters."

"You can't kill a sailorman, Chic," replied Roger, grinning. "Didn't you know that?"

"Is that so?" leered the other. We'll see."

He gave him a vicious kick and turned to the Captain again

"We're off the reefs, Capt'n," he resumed. "Anchored in safe water—waiting for that steamer to bring the reward for delivering the goods. How much was it? It ought to be a tidy little sum."

"There was no reward, Chic," replied Captain Holding, speaking slowly, "on this end. It's to be payed in New York when we return."

For a moment Doby's face went white with wrath and chagrin, and then it mottled the color of a turkey's comb. His eyes blazed.

"That's a lie!" he shouted.

Captain Holding smiled. "Saying it don't make it so," he said quietly.

Doby got up and paced back and forth in the narrow space. The news had upset him. If true there would be no money to pay the crew he had bribed. He stopped in his pacings, and faced his prisoner again.

"I want to know the truth," he said in an ugly mood, "and you'd better give it to me."

"I've told you all you can get out of me," sullenly answered the skipper.

"Is that so?" came the leering comment. "I think I can make you talk. I'll bring Jane down here, and force it from you. You can do most anything with a girl like Jane. If she won't listen to reason, then——"

He made a threatening motion and grinned. Captain Holding's grim visage underwent swift changes; but the sullen eyes showed no relenting. He shook his head slowly.

"Hold on, Chic," Roger called, as the infuriated man raised a hand as if to strike. "I'll tell you. Yes, there was a reward to be paid on this end—a pretty big one."

Doby turned eagerly to him. "How much?" he demanded.

ROGER remained silent a moment, watching his antagonist's face. His mind was busy; he ignored the look of reproach the captain gave him; pretended not to see his signals to keep quiet.

"I'll tell you, Chic," Roger continued, "tell you everything, if you'll promise not to injure Jane."

Doby scowled and shook his head.

"You can't collect the reward, Chic," Roger went on, "unless you know the proper signals. You don't suppose that steamer's coming out here to hail the first schooner that turns up. She might be running into a trap. If she's hovering off in the distance, she'll wait until she gets her signal that all's well."

"What were the signals?" browled Doby, realizing for the first time there were conditions to comply with that he hadn't dreamed of. He cursed himself for his stupidity. He might have known some exchange of signals would be arranged. "You tell me, and I'll be easy on you."

"It's not that I want. You got to promise you won't hurt Jane.

"All right," he nodded. "Nothing will harm her. Now go in!"

"Nor Ben Ames, nor any of the crew?"

"No, they take orders from me," was the sullen growl.

Roger hesitated a moment, glancing at the Captain as if to get his permission.

"Don't mind him," snapped Doby, thrusting his body between them. "You tell me, and I'll keep my promise."

"First thing, then, Chic, is the amount of the reward. It's ten thousand dollars."

A smile of crafty avarice crept into Chic's eyes. It was a larger sum than he had dared expect. He whetted his lips with his tongue, and nodded to Roger to proceed.

"The steamer must be somewhere off here waiting for the proper signals. You haven't seen her, I suppose? No? Well, she's seen you before this. Her commander must be watching you thru his glasses, and——"

"What's the signal?" interrupted Doby. "Get to the point."

"I'm coming to that. At low tide the reefs are bare—several feet out of water. Is it low tide now?"

"Yes! Go on."

"Then you want to take the small boat, and plant the American flag on the highest point of the exposed reef. Stand by it until you see the steamer coming. Then you can return to the schooner. That's all there is to it. No questions will be asked. You hand over the treasure, and they will pay the reward to any one in command. Now remember your promise about Jane!"

"Sure, I'll remember it," replied Doby, smiling wickedly, as he started for the companion, "but mebbe I'll forget to carry it out."

Roger uttered an angry imprecation, and struggled desperately to break his bonds. Doby waved a hand to him, and disappeared from view, accompanied by Niels. The two left alone in the narrow, smelly crews' quarters, Captain Holding turned his head and asked:

"Why'd you tell him that fairy tale, Roger? There were no signals. They were to recognize us by the schooner's rig and name."

"Well, if there wasn't any signals there ought to be!" blurted out Roger. "A pretty sort of how d'do if old Micastro's friends got possession of the schooner and loaded her down with armed men! They'd capture the steamer, wouldn't they?"

Captain Holding smiled and shook his head. "They couldn't do that."

Roger suddenly lost his scowl and grinned. "Well, Chic's going out to that reef to signal. Let him plant the American flag on it, and watch it. It will do him good. Wish he'd stay there until the tide comes up and drowns him. No such good luck, I suppose! Anyhow, Capt'n, this is our chance. While he's away with two or three of the crew we got to break loose. Reckon we can handle what's left. Mebbe we can talk to 'em, and make 'em listen to reason. We'll try it soon's Chic goes."

CHAPTER XIV.

TEN minutes later the sounds of ropes threading squeaking, protesting blocks, followed by a splash of something in the water on the starboard side, brought a grin to Roger's face and a smile of expectancy to the Captain's. Doby was lowering a boat to plant the American flag on the highest reef as a supposed signal to the steamer lurking somewhere just below the horizon. When they heard the dip of oars, and the gradually receding swish of a sharp bow cutting thru the water, the two prisoners turned to each other questioningly.

"Now's our last chance, Capt'n," whispered Roger, struggling to free himself. "H—l! They made a good job of it. Can't work a finger loose."

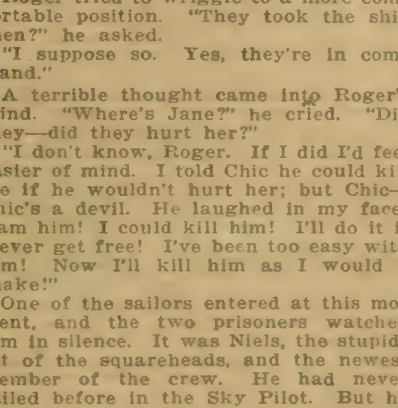
"Chic must have tied this knot," muttered Holding. "I taught him that double hitch."

They wriggled and struggled, writhing and twisting over the floor in a vain effort to release a hand or leg: but the knots held and the loops refused to yield. After ten minutes of silent effort, they stopped, panting and sweating. Their ruse in sending Chic and a couple of the sailors ashore was of no avail. They were bound so securely that nothing short of a knife or a free pair of hands could release them.

"Chic wins!" Roger growled finally, giving up the attempt. "He wins coming and going."

Captain Holding nodded. "If I knew Jane was safe, I could endure it," he groaned.

"So could I." Roger's sympathy for the old man was emphasized by his own feelings for the girl. The thought of her in the power of Chic and Ames maddened him. A slow, consuming rage possessed him. He began muttering maledictions in low, monotonous itera-



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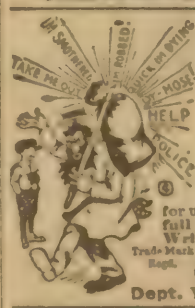

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tion. But this useless waste of passion got him nowhere, and finally he stopped and looked up again, with a grin on his face.

"Our only hope, Capt'n," he said, "is to get hold of one of the crew and corrupt him with bribes or threats. I wish one of the squareheads would come down here."

"If I could have a talk with Ben——" murmured the Captain, but Roger interrupted angrily.

"Ben's as bad as Chic!" he sputtered. "I want no dicker with him. I'll kill him on sight."

"I dunno," replied Holding, shaking his head. "Ben's not bad at heart. I've known him since he was a boy——"

"And Chic, too," sneered Roger. "They're a pair of human devils."

"Listen! Some one's coming!"

A light step at the head of the companion drew their eyes in that direction. They saw a small foot descending, then the hem of a skirt, and finally, in the murky gloom, the form and figure of Jane. The old skipper's voice trembled with emotion as he called her name. Tripping swiftly and lightly down the steep steps, Jane came into full view. Her face was pale and drawn, but the eyes were full of eager hope and expectancy.

"Father! Roger!" she whispered, stopping a moment to get accustomed to the dim light.

"Here! Here, Jane!" called the old skipper.

"You're not hurt?" she whispered.

"No!"

"And Roger—did they kill him?"

Roger laughed aloud from sheer delight in seeing and hearing her again. "No, they couldn't kill me," he said. "I got more lives than a cat."

Relieved by his words, Jane peered at him, and then smiled happily. She clutched at the bosom of her dress, and began in a trembling voice. "Listen, I must hurry!"

"Have they hurt you, Jane?" interrupted Captain Holding. "Has Ben insulted you?"

"No, no, Ben's helping me. He sent me down here. You must listen to me. It was all Chic's work. He threatened and cajoled and bribed the men to mutiny. He bent them to his will—hypnotized them, I think. Ben said they hardly knew what they were doing. They didn't want to mutiny. They—they——"

"Go on!" her father interrupted when she hesitated for words.

"They—they regretted it as soon as it was over. They've been sulking ever since. They're sore, and want to get even with Chic for misleading them."

"Well, they got a chance! Wasn't it Chic that rowed away to the reef?"

"Yes, it seemed almost like a miracle. He took Pete and Niels with him—said he had to plant the American flag on the Half Moon Reefs—wanted to see it flying there. Chic's funny at times." She laughed hysterically. "He's crazy, I believe."

"Sure!" laughed Roger. "He's crazy to lay his hands on that reward. We sent him on a wild goose chase to the reef."

Jane stared with uncomprehending eyes at the speaker, but her father broke in sharply. "Cut these ropes, Jane! I want to settle with Ben."

"No, I can't unless you promise that—that——"

"What?"

"You'll forgive Ben and Abel and Lije and the others."

"Forgive 'em!" roared the skipper. "Forgive 'em for mutiny—for imprisoning me and seizing the schooner? I'll send 'em to prison for life."

The girl's face winced and paled. "No, you mustn't do that," she protested. "I can't release you is—if——"

Captain Holding interrupted her with another roar. "You can't release us! You—you're with the d—n mutinous crew?"

"Please, father, listen!"

Roger cut the skipper's rage short. "Give way, Capt'n, and let her tell her story. We ain't getting anywhere arguing."

Holding subsided sullenly, growling under his breath.

"Ben's sorry—heartbroken," she added. "So are the others—Abel and Lije. They're going to retake the schooner. They won't let Chic return except as a prisoner. Now he's away they've plucked up courage to do this."

"And they sent you down here to plead for them?" sneered the skipper.

"No, they didn't send me. They let me come the instant Chic was off the schooner. They kept me in the cabin until then. Ben has been kind to me—said he'd protect me. They're going to re-take the schooner and give her back to you. They're in possession of her now."

"Then why don't you let us free?" growled her father.

"Because—because—I told them I'd speak to you, and get your promise not to prosecute them before——"

"Before you'd release us?"

Jane nodded weakly and caught her breath.

The skipper was ominously silent for a few moments. "You go back to Ben," he said finally in a low, determined voice, "and tell him I'll put him in irons and send him to prison soon's we reach port!"

"Oh, father!" Jane actually wept and lowered her beautiful head. "I—I can't!"

"Then you're no daughter of mine!"

ROGER roused himself. "Easy there, skipper!" he said. "That's worse than anything I've heard from Chic's lips, and the Lord knows he's foul-mouthed enough to shame a dog. You got to take that back, or I'll join the crew and help keep you a prisoner. If Jane will release me I'll promise to—to—give Ben and the others a square deal. They ain't so much to blame as—as—say, Jane, you go on deck and tell Ben I'll stand by him. I'll testify in court that your father's a liar—there wasn't any mutiny—that Chic seized the schooner alone. I'll swear it on a stack of bibles; and a mate's word is nearly as good as a captain's in court——"

"Shut up!" growled the Captain. "I don't need your advice. I know how to handle my crew and daughter."

"I'll bet you—don't!"

"Jane," the skipper continued, turning to her, "go on deck and send Ben down here. Tell him I want to talk with him."

The girl hesitated a moment, gazing at her parent with moist, frightened eyes. Then meekly obeying, she crept out of the narrow place and slowly ascended the companion to the deck.

The two prisoners remained stolidly silent until Ben Ames clumsily stumbled down the steps. He was nervous and frightened. With a hangdog expression on his face, he glanced from one to the other.

"You wanted to see me, Capt'n?" he said, respectfully.

"Yes, Ben, I want to see you, and give you the worst tongue lashing you ever had," growled the skipper. "Then when I'm free I'm going to give you the worst licking you ever had. After that—we may call it quits."

"You can begin now, Capt'n—I 'lowed I'd free you the minit Mr. Doby left."

Suiting actions to his words, he took out his sheath knife and cut the ropes that bound the two. Then, standing upright, and saluting, he added: "I'm ready, Capt'n, for the tongue lashing and the licking."

"You—you think you can lick me, mubbe!" roared the skipper, struggling to his feet, and making a rush for him.

"No, sir, I don't intend to fight."

Captain Holding glared at him. His sudden meekness stumped him. It was imposible to fight a man who wouldn't resist; it was against all the ethics of the profession. The skipper stood before him, squared for the encounter, fists doubled; but Ben folded his arms, nodded and waited. Roger rose to his fact, and after watching the two for a minute laughed outright.

"You can't make a quarrel if the other man won't fight, Capt'n. Ben's got you licked now. He's a pacifist, and you can't beat them nohow. Shucks! We're wasting time! Chic will be returning soon. Let's get on deck and breathe some fresh air. It's vile down here."

His words broke the tension. The ghost of a smile flickered in the corners of Captain Holding's eyes; they twinkled merrily.

"Ben," he said slowly, "you go on deck, and take charge until I come. You're first mate now. I got to have discipline aboard, and this youngster's defied me. Both of you'll answer to me later for insubordination and mutiny."

"You see what I've done for you, Ben," jeered Roger, scrambling up the steps. "I've gone and got myself in trouble."

Jane met them at the head of the companion, white of face, and trem-

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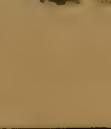

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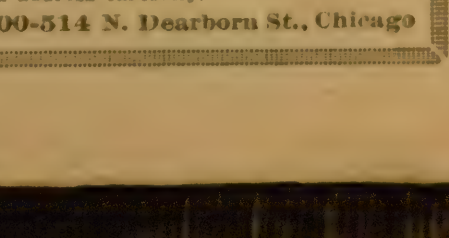

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bling. Roger's smile reassured her.

"Is everything all right?" she whispered.

"Sure! Your daddy was playing the high and mighty tyrant to preserve his dignity. Now that he's disciplined Ben, and disrated me, he feels better."

CHIC had already landed on the low-lying reef and planted a flag in the sand. It was waving gently in the breeze, a false signal to some invisible eyes below the horizon. With Captain Holding in command, the crew drew a deep breath of relief and sprang eagerly to obey his orders. In a few minutes there were no signs of the late mutiny, and Captain Holding paced the deck of his schooner sole arbiter of the fate of every man.

But there was a suppressed air of excitement written in every face. The return of Chic Doby would bring about the climax to the whole voyage. He would not yield calmly to the sudden turn of events. Just what he would do was a puzzle even to Captain Holding. Roger was as much disturbed as Jane or her father. If a spirit of forgiveness, the skipper showed leniency to the renegade, he intended to take matters in his own hands. The hour of atonement had struck for Chic.

Bending over the port rail, Roger was suddenly aroused from his reverie by Jane's short, sharp intake of breath. "He's returning!" she whispered.

The small boat had put off from the reef, with Chic standing in the stern, and the two seamen bending at their oars. Either he had grown suspicious, or was returning to the schooner for something that he had forgotten, or the sight of Roger and the skipper on the deck had caught his eye. The boat skimmed lightly thru the water until it was within hailing distance. Then at an order from Chic, Niels and Pete rested on their oars.

"Ben, what's happened?" Doby had called, cupping his hand.

Captain Holding motioned to Ames to stand back. Advancing to the rail, he called: "Come aboard, Chic! Your little game's up. You either come aboard a prisoner or go back to that reef and stay there until you rot. I'll give you five minutes to decide. At the end of that time we weigh anchor and leave."

The distance was too great for them to see the expression on his face, but it required no imagination to picture the malevolent hatred that distorted it. He stood perfectly still, defiant and ugly. His enemies, ranged alongside the ship's side, gloating at his downfall, brought all the evil of his nature to the surface. A smile parted his lips.

"If I stay, Capt'n," he called finally, "you'll stay with me. I told you I'd make you pay some day, and now—d—n you!—the time's come!"

With a swift jerk of the hand he whipped out a small automatic, and flung into position. There was a puff of smoke, a sharp crack, and a bullet whizzed straight for the mark.

Roger, who had been watching the man closely, anticipated the move. He had been expecting something like this. A rat cornered always struck back; it was the nature of the rodent.

"Get back, Capt'n!" he shouted, hurling himself against the burly form of the skipper. A twinge of pain in his own shoulder made him drop his right arm; he jerked and winced. The bullet intended for the skipper's heart had buried itself in Roger's shoulder. Before he could rightly determine the extent of the wound, a scream from Jane caused him to glance up.

She was pointing in the direction of the boat. Roger turned in time to see the final climax. Chic Doby was in trouble with Pete and Niels, who up to this time had followed him as obediently as big Newfoundland dogs, but his attempt to shoot the Captain had aroused them. An oar crashed on his head when he tried to shoot again. The unexpected bath did not cool Chic's anger, but while he spluttered and struggled to swim back to the boat one of those sea tragedies that frequently happen in tropical waters startled all.

There was a sudden flash of white fins, a trail of sudsy foam, and a big man-eating shark turned on its back, exposing its glistening white belly to the sun, and then man and fish disappeared beneath the ocean's surface. Niels and Pete recovered from their consternation, and beat the water with their oars, but they were too late to render assistance.

Jane covered her eyes with both hands and wept. Captain Holding removed his cap, and mumbled words that might have been anything from a prayer to a benediction. Roger stared at the spot where the waters had closed over the head of his old enemy, and shuddered.

CHAPTER XV.

THE little Nicaraguan steamer commissioned to meet the Sky Pilot off the Half Moon Reefs had been cruising around for several days, the commander considerably fussed and peeved at the delay and quite willing to abandon the trip; but the importance of the stakes at issue kept him on the job in spite of his personal wishes. On the second day of the arrival of the schooner, a smudge of smoke appeared on the horizon, and the puffy little steamer bore down on them under forced draft.

The transference of the public documents that had been stolen from the Nicaraguan government by General Micastro was expeditiously begun. Captain Holding was as anxious to get under way as the commander of the steamer. He had lost enough time in the trip already, and he was as short and peevish as his pompous little fellow conspirator.

The documents were examined aboard the Sky Pilot, and after being checked up, the reward was handed over to Captain Holding. The cargo that had caused so much trouble was then quickly transferred to the steamer, and the schooner was free to continue the trip to Rio de Janeiro.

With favoring winds, she turned her nose south-southeast, laying a course straight across the Caribbean for the Venezuelan coast which she would skirt on her way south. The succeeding days and nights brought fair weather and steady breezes, and the early delays were rapidly being made up.

Roger's shot in the shoulder put him on the sick list, and he enjoyed all the privileges of a favored passenger and a wounded hero. He was in a fair way to be spoiled by attention. Jane acted as his nurse, and ordered him about as tyrannically as most nurses do their patients. Aiding and abetting her in this, Captain Holding threatened to make himself a nuisance. Even Ben Ames, whose reinstatement as mate thru Roger's connivance had softened his spirit of animosity, displayed a friendly interest in his recovery.

Off Cape Saint Roque, with Rio within a week's run of fair weather, Roger began to show restlessness, broken by fits of moodiness. Jane at first attributed this change to the improved condition of his wound and a natural desire to resume his activities as mate. He would take long spells at the wheel, or ask for the midnight watch where, alone with his thoughts, he would pace the deck restlessly as a caged lion.

Jane, troubled and worried by his attitude, stole out of the cabin late one night, and joined him at the wheel. It was a clear night, and steering was no more than a mechanical performance. Her appearance on deck at such a late hour startled him.

"What's wrong, Jane?" he asked.

"Nothing! I couldn't sleep."

She ranged herself alongside of him, and laid one hand on a spoke. Together they watched the heaving sea ahead, silenced by the beauties of the night and their own thoughts. She stirred finally, and turned to him.

"What is it, Roger?" she asked abruptly. "You don't seem happy. You're restless and——"

"It's a long trip," he murmured, interrupting.

"Are you getting tired of it?" she asked, smiling.

"Yes—no! I don't know."

The answer disturbed her. She waited silently for him to explain, hoping that he would confide in her.

"We'll be in Rio within a week, won't we?" he added after a long pause.

"I suppose so. You should know better than I. You've been there before, haven't you?"

"Yes, twice. It's a beautiful city, and full of attractions. I know old acquaintances there, if they haven't moved."

She sighed, and then asked: "You'll call on them?"

Roger gazed straight ahead, lost in deep thought. In the white moonlight, she saw that his face was pale and his eyes unnaturally brilliant. She wanted to comfort him, but didn't know how. A little fit of jealousy that the friends he might meet in Rio would disturb their relationship poisoned her mind.

Suddenly he started, and, turning abruptly to her, caught the look in her eyes. He smiled a moment, and then gripped the spokes of the wheel with both hands. His eyes bent on hers, burning as with a fever.

"Jane," he said in a low, tremulous voice, "where is that bottle of cocaine?"

A pistol shot could not have startled her more. In one painful flash the secret of his moodiness came to her. The old craving for the drug was mastering him. It was not restlessness for more activity, nor the monotony of the voyage, but the craving for the drug that had changed him. She returned his gaze with frightened eyes.

"Have you it with you?" he added, in a low, tense voice.

She nodded, and made a motion with a hand toward her bosom. "Then give it to me," he said, almost harshly. "I want it!"

When she hesitated, her eyes beseechingly imploring him not to force her, he added: "You promised to return it if I ever asked for it. Now I want it."

"Yes," her dry lips murmured, "I promised, and—and I'll keep it. But, Roger, please——"

"Hand it to me!" he interrupted, extending a hand.

SHE withdrew the bottle from the folds of her dress and handed it to him. A grim smile came to his lips. He held the glass up so that the white moonbeams shone thru it. His eyes glistened feverishly; then they softened an became quite normal.

He turned to her with a little chuckle gurgling in his throat. "You thought I wanted to take some of it," he said, "and you were afraid. Why'd you give it to me?"

"Because I promised," she breathed softly, her mind in confusion.

"Do you always keep your promise?"

She nodded. "I try to."

"Be careful," he admonished. "I may exact a promise of you that will test you. Would you keep it?"

"Yes—if it was for your good," she stammered.

"This one will be," he said in a strange voice, "but it may not seem so to you—or to me—at times. I imagine it will nearly break our friendship—nearly kill both of us. But in the end—if you persist——"

"Roger, what is it?—what are you talking about?" she interrupted, seizing an arm.

"I'll tell you in a minute," he replied. "But first this bottle. I wanted it, while I had the strength of mind, to put it where it couldn't trouble either

GALLSTONE TROUBLES

A new booklet, written by Dr. E. E. Paddock, Box 5 P. 201, Kansas City, Mo., tells of improved method of treating catarrhal inflammation of the Gall Bladder and Bile Ducts associated with Gall Stones, from which remarkable results are reported. Write for booklet and free trial plan.—Adv.

LEG SORES

The Bayles Distributing Co., 1856 Grand Ave., Kansas City, Mo., will mail Free Sample of ANTI-FLAMMA, a Soothing Anti-septic Poultice that draws out the poisons, stops the itching around sores and Heals While You Work. Write today describing case.—Adv.

LADIES, PRESERVE YOUR YOUTHFUL APPEARANCE.

Madame Mignette's Beauty Cream and Skin Food removes every defect, spot, freckle, pimple, blemish or wrinkle, leaving the skin soft, clear and smooth. It is perfectly harmless and will not injure the most delicate skin. It preserves and brings back the youthful glow to the face and ruddiness to the cheeks, preserving it in this condition until extreme old age. This preparation has been used for years, and hundreds are now using it and are more than delighted with the results. Send us ten (10) cents for formula which you can have filled at any drug store at a very small cost. Do not delay, but write at once. Box 421, Blairsville, Pa. —Adv.

APPENDICITIS

Appendicitis attacks at any moment, even persons seemingly in good health. Usually, however, it is preceded by stomach trouble or constipation. Many people have a bowel movement every day, but it is not a COMPLETE movement and much old, stale matter stays in the system to ferment and cause trouble. Often there is only a small passage in the center of the bowels while the sides are covered with old hard matter which sticks to the bowels and often poisons the system for months, making you feel tired all the time and "half-sick". Even if your bowels move slightly each day, that is not enough. There must be an occasional THOROUGH, complete cleansing to bring out all the accumulated, poisonous waste matter.

Appendicitis is an intestinal infection spreading to the appendix, and it can be guarded against in the same manner in which you guard against the spread of throat infection (sore throat). When you have sore throat, you can often prevent further trouble by using an antiseptic wash or gargle to destroy the germs, and a laxative to carry off the poisons from the body. Very similar treatment is necessary to guard against appendicitis. But instead of an antiseptic wash for the throat, an INTESTINAL antiseptic is necessary and a COMPLETE drainage of the bowel system.

INTESTINAL ANTISEPTIC

There is now offered to the public a preparation having the DOUBLE action of an intestinal antiseptic and a COMPLETE system cleaner. This preparation, known as ADLER-I-KA, acts as follows:

It tends to destroy or remove harmful germs and colon bacili in the intestinal canal, thus guarding against appendicitis and other diseases having their start here.

It is the most COMPLETE system cleaner ever offered to the public, acting on BOTH upper and lower bowel and bringing out foul matter which poisoned the system for months and which nothing else can dislodge. It brings out all gases, thus immediately relieving pressure on the heart and other vital organs. It is astonishing the great amount of poisonous matter ADLER-I-KA draws from the alimentary canal—matter you never thought was in your system. Try it right after a natural movement and notice how much MORE foul matter is brought out which was poisoning your system. In slight disorders, such as occasional constipation, sour stomach, gas on the stomach and sick headaches, one spoonful ADLER-I-KA ALWAYS brings relief. ADLER-I-KA is a constant surprise to people who have used only ordinary stomach and bowel medicines and the various oils and waters, on account of its rapid, pleasant and COMPLETE action.

REPORTS FROM PHYSICIANS

"I have used Adler-i-ka in my practice and have found nothing to excel it." (Signed) Dr. W. A. Line.

"I have found nothing in my 50 years practice to excel Adler-i-ka." (Signed) Dr. James Weaver.

"I use Adler-i-ka in all bowel cases. Some require only one dose." (Signed) Dr. F. M. Prettyman.

"After taking Adler-i-ka feel better than for 20 years. Haven't language to express the AWFUL IMPURITIES eliminated from my system." (Signed) J. E. Puckett.

"Thanks to Adler-i-ka I can sleep all night now, something I could not do for years." (Signed) Cora E. Noblett.

Adler-i-ka is sold by leading druggists everywhere or sent all charges prepaid for $1.20 (large bottle, enough for full treatment). Write for free booklet about appendicitis. Adlerika Company, Dept. V, St. Paul, Minnesota.

You Can Have This Auto Free

A FINE new five passenger touring car will be given absolutely free to some one who acts right away. Wouldn't you be happy and proud to own this fine automobile? Think of the fun you can have taking your friends out riding. Hundreds of men, women, boys and girls all over the country are winning automobiles. As soon as they see the advertisement they go to work, solve the puzzle and so get a great big start in the contest.

Solve the Puzzle

This picture shows one of our friends driving an automobile like the one we are going to give away. In this picture are six partly-hidden faces which it will be lots of fun for you to find. It is not so easy to find the faces in this picture, but by twisting and turning the picture around they will be revealed to you. Can you find them?

You Will Win

a prize if you do. Try it and don't give up, it will pay you. When you have found four of the faces, mark each with a cross (X), cut out the picture and mail it to us. When your answer is received we will send you a beautiful surprise present—you will delight in owning this present.

If You Are Quick You Can Have It

This test is to prove whether you are quick and give you a good head start, so solve the puzzle, mark the faces and write your name and address clearly on a piece of paper and inclose with it four cents in stamps to help pay the cost of mailing the Free Surprise Present we will send you. But that is not all. To give you a good head start, we will send you

2,000 Free Auto Votes

and tell you all about this splendid five passenger touring car and show you how you can get it if you are quick. There is no expense, no entrance fee. No lottery or game of chance.

Other Rewards to All

This is the easiest and most liberal offer ever made. It is so arranged that every one who will do a little advertising for us will be richly rewarded. We will give away bicycles, tool boxes, cutlery, cameras, watches, sets of dishes, and many other presents too numerous to mention. Every one who does what we say gets a present, and if you do it well you get this automobile free in addition to the presents. Get your share of them.

Don't Wait—Solve the Puzzle Today

Hurry! Find at least four of the partly-hidden faces in the picture, mark each with a cross (X), cut out the picture and coupon and mail it to us with four cents in stamps to help pay the cost of mailing expenses for the fine prize we will send you for solving the puzzle. Be sure to inclose your name and address. We will also give you 2,000 free votes toward winning the auto. There are no losers in this contest. You get prizes for everything you do. You can win this auto if you are quick.

W. D. BOYCE COMPANY, Auto Contest Puzzle Dept. 4, 500 North Dearborn St., CHICAGO

of us any more. Jane, I'm going to throw it overboard."

"Oh!" she exclaimed, her eyes brightening and glistening with resurging happiness.

"We'll make an end of it," he added. "So long's it's in your possession, it—it—troubles me. Here it goes!"

He raised it above his head, and glanced at her. She nodded approval. With a heave he flung the bottle into the sea, where it made a tiny splash and disappeared beneath the waves.

They remained quiet a few moments, their thoughts intent upon the act that meant so much to both of them. Finally, he turned to her with a faint, wry smile on his lips.

"Now for that promise, Jane," he said gently. "I told you it would be a difficult one—difficult to give and more difficult to keep. Are you listening?"

She nodded.

In a low, constrained voice, with his eyes still on her, he continued: "When we reach, Rio, Jane, I want you to lock me in the cabin, and keep me there until we weigh anchor for the return trip. Under no conditions must I be allowed to step ashore. You must watch me and guard me every minute of our stay in port. You may need help, for I shall change my mind a dozen times. I'll beg and implore you to let me out, and even try to outwit you—use bodily force, perhaps. But, if necessary, you must get your father to help you—knock me down, iron me, keep me a prisoner—anything to hold me on the schooner. Will you do that?"

She was hanging with breathless interest upon his words, one hand resting heavily on his arm.

"If you do," he continued, in the same strained voice, "it may cure me. The long return trip will let me get a final and lasting grip on myself. But now—now—I'm not sure! One is never sure until—until—Jane," he broke off, the beads of perspiration on his forehead, "you don't know the frightful temptation—the consuming craze—the blasting, infernal madness that seizes me! It comes in waves that sweep me off my feet, it paralyzes the will, drags me down, makes me a weak animal, ruthless and immoral. I can't fight it alone with the stuff around!"

"Roger," she said, raising her head, and looking into his eyes, "you won't have to fight it alone. I shall always be by your side. Together we'll—we'll——"

Frightened by her own words, and the look in his eyes, she became suddenly quiet and disturbed.

"Together, Jane!" he said, repeating her words. "You mean that that——"

Still confused by her confession, she turned away from his burning gaze. His hands suddenly dropped to his side, and with a sigh he moved toward the wheel. His actions aroused her.

"Yes, Roger," she repeated, catching an arm and holding him, "always together! We'll fight it out together—and we'll win! Can't we?"

He gazed in silence at the tell-tale face and sparkling eyes—then clutching her in his arms, sweeping her off her feet, he cried fiercely:

"Yes, we'll win, dear! The victory's already in sight! Nothing can snatch it from us now! Victory and love, Jane, they shall be ours forever and ever—amen."

The End.

Soulful Stuff and Jazz.

"LET'S have that same record again," suggested the pretty girl's brother's friend.

"Oh, nix on it!" replied the pretty girl's brother. "It's too classical. Let's have some jazz."

"Oh, no; not jazz!" objected the pretty girl's brother's friend. "Music shouldn't be desecrated by anything like jazz. It is too sacred and soulful. It is intended for the spiritual in man, not for his crass animal side."

"Where do you get that stuff?" said the pretty girl's brother. "You are years be hind the times. All that bunk about the spiritual in man has been passed up long ago. The spiritual in man is no better than the animal. Not for me! I like animals lots better than spirits and there is no law against them.

"It is nature that human beings love most these days, and animals are nature. The highest compliment that you can pay a human voice is to say, 'She sings like a bird!' You never heard anybody say, 'She sings like a spirit,' or 'She makes a noise like a ghost.' And if a man is speedy on the paths we say, 'He runs like a deer'."

"We might say, 'He runs like lightning'!" suggested the pretty girl. "Or we might say, if we wanted to, 'He is swift as thought'."

"I know a man," continued the brother, "who makes big money because he can make a noise like a goat, or a pig, or a horse. Any time a human being can mount to the accomplishments of animals he is sure to be interesting and praiseworthy and in receipt of a pretty good salary, too."

"I know a man who makes more money for making a noise like a sawmill than your friend gets for imitating goats," argued the brother's friend.

"Yes," added the pretty girl, "and I know a man who makes big money because he can make a noise like a bass horn or a calliope."

"Yes," said the pretty girl's brother. "Fellows who can imitate sawmills and calliopes and bass horns make a hit because these instruments are more like animals than anything else and are enjoyable in proportion to their likeness to the beast of the field, or the bird of the air, or the little fish swimming in the water."

"You're wrong," declared the brother's friend. "People are fond of music when it resembles aesthetic nature, sunsets, breezes, showers and beautiful landscapes."

"Absolutely not!" thundered the pretty girl's brother. "Landscape music is the Fritz and you know it. You know you wouldn't stack landscape harmony up against turtle dove stuff, now, would you? No, you wouldn't."

Then, seeing that the phonograph had the floor with its soulful record, the pretty girl's brother stalked out of the room just when he had the best of the argument, for the pretty girl and her brother's friend were making sheep's eyes at each other.

In Case of Trouble.

"YOU'RE always about twenty minutes late!" exclaimed the cafeteria cashier as the traffic cop entered the place and smiled his best smile in her direction.

"Oh, quit your teasing!" replied the traffic cop. "But I'm glad you've been worrying about me. It shows interest in my welfare."

"Guess again!" said the cashier. "I'm not watching the clock to see whether any mere man is late or not. There was no affection in my remark, James. What I was trying to say was that we had a little trouble here an hour ago and there wasn't a policeman within seven miles of the place, for all I know."

"Why, I was just around the corner!" protested the traffic cop. "The slightest commotion would have brought me to the spot where the murder occurred—if any did occur."

"So?" said the cashier. "What do you mean by slightest commotion? What we had here was a young riot."

"I'm sorry I missed it, Marjorie."

"It seems to me," pursued the cashier, "that you cops are blessed with an extra sense that tips you off where trouble is and leads you away from it till the smoke of the battle has cleared up."

"That is the general opinion people have of us, Marjorie, but it is a libel."

"I'm speaking from my own experience, James. What other people think don't affect me. When I want a policeman I know I can never get one."

"Help!" cried the traffic cop. "You know that there is one policeman who has been throwing himself at you since he began to eat here and you never gave him any encouragement."

"Aw, I mean real trouble, the kind we just had before you came in. A big husky customer who looked like a heavyweight champ got into an argument with a little mosquitoweight waiter and chased him into the kitchen. Then he overturned the short order range, knocked three cooks and two dishwashers down, and then ran up the alley. That's when we needed you.

"One night last week a gentleman friend was taking me home at 1 in the morning, when two yeggs stepped out from behind a tree and shoved a .44 blue steel into his ribs, at the same time saying he should throw up his hands and take off his new overcoat. My friend decided in one second that it was useless to argue, so he punched one yegg in the countenance and beat it down the street, leaving me to tell the holdups that it was against the rules to rob a young girl whose escort was a better track runner than a protector. The lads saw my side of it, but, believe me, James, that's when I needed you."

"I see," said the traffic cop, "that you do need me, in my official capacity."

"Good-night!" cried the cafeteria cashier. "That's when you wouldn't be there. Your official capacity, my eye! If we were married, you'd have to give up your official capacity—or else check it at the police station before you came home."

"It can be done!" said the traffic cop, blissfully.

His Decorated Optic.

THE young man had a decoration on his face. You could hardly call it a beauty spot, for it was a discoloration of the region surrounding his right eye. He tried to look as if he had got thru attempting some daring feat in sport or war, but neither in war nor sport does one, as a rule, get a black eye, so when he met his chum the latter wanted to know all about it.

"It was only a lovers' quarrel," said the young man.

"H'm," said his friend. "She must be a pretty powerful woman."

The young man sighed.

"She didn't do it," he sighed. "It was her other lover."

Collaboration

(Continued From Page 3)

a cheap burlesque on his own work. The result had been so far from the original and so foreign to his natural style that even he had recognized the incongruity of it.

He found himself in the position of an artist who, in a moment of inspiration, has perfected some great work of art and then finds that he had used up all of his creative ability in that one act and is never again able to reach the high standard that he has unconsciously set; only in this case he himself had not the standard—some one had done that for him, and now, too late, he found that this fictitious reputation which he had accepted was likely to prove a millstone around his neck. He could not get rid of it—and he could not live with it there. It was too late for him to come out and acknowledge that he had accepted money and credit for another man's work; he would never be able to live down the disgrace and ridicule. The last poor shreds of his former reputation as a writer had been torn from him, and now he was guilty of a greater crime than plagiarism—he had actually stolen another man's work outright, received credit for it and pocketed fifteen hundred dollars of his money.

Meanwhile Jabez was not happy. When he sent in his next story to McLarnon's this time under his own name, it was promptly returned to him with another letter from the editor:

Sir:

We regret that you should persist in copying other men's ideas and successes.

Your story, "The Pawn of Fate," is in direct imitation of H. Garton Carruthers' "The Man Who Tried to Bribe God."

Under the circumstances we do not care to consider any further contributions from your pen.

Respectfully yours,
M'LARNON'S.

Carruthers can't sell because his stories don't resemble mine, and I can't sell because my stories resemble—my own. He tore the letter in two and threw it into the waste-paper basket, where Carruthers presently found it, fished it out and, piecing it together, read it. Then a great light broke over him. "So, the little rat, that's what he's been up to," he stormed, "trying to climb to success on my shoulders. Biting the hand that fed him—the ingrate."

He worked himself up into a splendid rage in which he had determined to discharge Jabez; to sue him; to attack him with his fists. And then he remembered the check for fifteen hundred dollars that had been paid for "The Man Who Tried to Bribe God."

"That's the largest check I've received in years," he mused. "If I expose Jabez I'll have to return that check, and if I expose him I'll have to explain. H-umm!"

Finally he called Jabez to his room. "See here, Sharple, I've been keeping my eye on you," he began, in his solemn tones and with his "keen look." Jabez started and looked frightened. "I know that you are anxious to write; in fact, that you have been writing without much success, for some time." He glared at the shrinking Sharple, and then changed his whole manner into one of ingratiating condescension. "Now, you are a clever man; almost too clever. It has recently occurred to me that we might collaborate."

He paused and looked at Jabez as if to allow his stupendous condescension time to sink in, and therein he made a mistake, for it gave Jabez time to recover himself and to think. "He's on to me," decided Jabez, "and he wants to make terms."

"Now, suppose we collaborate on some stories," continued Carruthers. "I have the reputation, and anything with my name on it would find an immediate market. Why, since I wrote "The Man Who Tried to Bribe God"-I have been swamped with requests for work along similar lines." Again he paused and attempted to look at Jabez, but there was such a look of cynical contempt met him that he faltered, paused, rearranged his collar, and then floundered on, "Now—er—any one could write that style; could—er—I could teach you, so that with my name on it—you understand?"

"I understand," admitted Jabez.

"Think the matter over and let me know what you decide," urged Carruthers.

JABEZ thought. He had forced Carruthers to father his own brain-child, and now Carruthers refused to give it up. That child threatened to be the ruin of both of them. H. Garton could not write up to the fictitious reputation that it had gained for him, and Jabez seemed even farther away from having his work accepted than ever.

"There's no need wasting time over this matter," began Jabez in tones of calm decision. "I have already figured it out on a percentage basis of 60-40."

"I was about to propose 75-25, which later I might make 50-50, as you developed," suggested Carruthers.

"We're at cross-purposes," smiled Jabez with a confident air. "The 40 per cent is to be your end of the bargain."

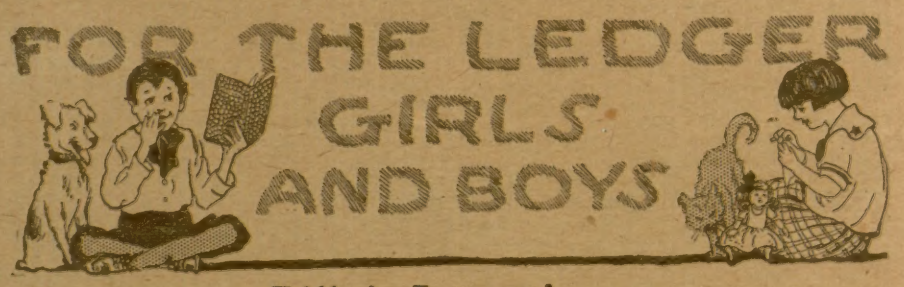
"Preposterous!" exclaimed Carruthers, but his voice failed to ring true.

"Which is the amount that I am willing to pay for the use of your name," Jabez went on, heedless of the interruption. "Also, the contract is to be antedated so as to include the first story turned out under these conditions."

"What do you mean by that?" A frightened look began to appear in Carruthers' eyes. Jabez was not proving quite as docile as he had expected.

"I mean that I intend having my percentage on the story called 'The Man Who Tried to Bribe God.'"

"Thank God. I've still got my self-respect," cried Carruthers, as he sat down and scribbled out a check. "There's one man that is meaner than I am, for I've never welched in a game yet. Here. Here's your entire fifteen hundred dollars. Take it and get to hell out of here!"



Billy's Inventions

MILLY and Billy quite agreed that Stillman Farm was a most delightful place to spend the summer. They were out in the air all day, feeding the chickens, seeing the cows milked, hunting for eggs in the barn and picking daisies and wild flowers to their heart's content.

They even had their own little garden, which Luke, the farmer's son, showed them how to care for.

Luke was "very interesting," Billy said. "He knew so many wonderful things about birds, flowers, gardens—everything."

"What are you doing, Luke," asked Milly one day, seating herself on the back-door step beside him, watching him cut up potatoes into small pieces, and drop them into a basket. "Are those for dinner, because you've forgotten to peel them, you know."

"No," said Luke, smiling. "These are going to be planted in the potato patch, and will, I hope, grow into a good crop."

"Billy gazed at him unbelievingly. "Do you mean to say that those smitches of potato will grow into big ones like we have for dinner?"

"Sure," said Luke. "And if you are here in August, you can help me dig them up; but there is Nurse calling you to dinner, so you'd better run along."

Billy seemed rather quiet at dinner, which was most unusual, and when it was over, he beckoned Milly out into the garden.

"I have a great idea," he began.

"Yes?" said Milly, hesitatingly, for Billy's "great ideas" often meant some prank, that ended in dire punishment for both.

"Oh, pshaw, girls are always frightened, but this time you need not be, for it can't hurt any one, and may turn out to be a great invention."

"See this," pulling a great hunk of cake from his pocket.

Milly backed away, putting her hands behind her, for she was always afraid of tricks with Billy. Once he had offered her a seemingly innocent rosy-cheeked apple, which, as she touched it, sent a stream of water up into her face.

"Well," continued Billy excitedly. "You heard what Luke said about those smitches of potatoes growing into whole ones. Why can't the same thing happen with cake? I saved this from dinner, and now we'll go and plant it."

"I don't know why," said Milly, "but somehow I don't think it will do. Why don't you ask Luke?"

"Hush, silly. Don't you know inventions are always secret. You must promise not to say a word to any one."

Milly promised, only half convinced,

and they stole down to their garden, and having broken the cake into pieces, carefully planted them just as they had seen Luke plant the flower seeds.

Eagerly they watched for the least sign of a leaf, and when, after a week of disappointment, a rainy spell set in, they were disconsolate, for they were strictly forbidden to go in the garden. At last their patience gave out, and they decided to confide in Luke, and ask him to report progress. Luke looked very solemn when they told him, and promised secrecy.

"Yes," he said on his return. "There is surely something growing there. I can't see any buds yet, but I'll watch."

Every day he reported that the plant was thriving, and when at last the sun came out, they rushed hand-in-hand to their garden.

"What do you think they saw?"

There was a plant with some small objects hanging from it. Looking closer they found they were ring sugar-cookies, crisp and brown, as tho just baked.

They gazed in wonder. Then Milly said: "It seems queer that these cookies should grow, when we planted plum-cake. These are like I saw Mrs. Stillman baking yesterday, and——"

A shout of laughter interrupted her, and there was Luke, standing at the fence. "You mustn't mind my fun," he said, as he came forward. "I only meant it as a joke. I am sure if you had stopped to think carefully, dearies, you would have known such a thing could not be. I thought anyway we'd have some fun out of it, so I placed that plant there, and hung the cookies on. Remember this: That no matter how smart folks may be in making things grow out of the ground, they always have to go to Mother Nature for the seeds and roots to put in. They are not clever enough to make these."

"Oh, Luke, Luke! You're a big fraud," said Milly, "but we'll forgive you if you'll take us to that picnic tomorrow."

"Sure I will," said Luke heartily.

Billy held out his hand. "I wish I knew as much as you do, Luke," he said meekly.

The Folding Bed.

LITTLE boy had returned from a week's visit to his aunt and was trying to describe the folding bed he had been sleeping in.

"It lays down at night, mamma, and stands on its hind legs in the daytime."

Wisdom Undismayed.

"POP, what is a deponent?"

"He's a man who works around depots, of course. Don't ask such fool questions."

CLASSIFIED WANT ADS

Information— The rate for one insertion in The Saturday Blade and one insertion in the Chicago Ledger is 35 cents a word, minimum 14 words, less 3% for cash. Each initial and group of figures is counted as a word, and the name and address are also counted. This is the minimum rate; neither more nor less is charged, irrespective of size or number of insertions. An ad may appear in both publications of the same week, or in the Blade of one week and the Ledger of the next.

W. D. BOYCE CO., Publisher, 500-514 N. Dearborn St., CHICAGO.

SALESMEN WANTED

WERE YOU EVER OFFERED A GROCERY store? You can handle sugar, flour, canned goods, dried fruit, coffee and entire line of groceries, as well as paints, roofing, aluminum ware and automobile oils, with no rent to pay; no money invested; take large orders from samples. Goods are guaranteed and proven quality. Selling experience not necessary. Steady, profitable work for "workers." Address Hitchcock-Hill Co., Dept. 218, Chicago, Ill. Reference: Any bank or Express Co.

AGENTS WANTED

SELL WHAT MILLIONS WANT. NEW, wonderful Liberty portraits—Creates tremendous interest—Absolutely different—Unique. Enormous demand—30 hours' service. Liberal credit. Outfit and catalogue free. $100 weekly profit easy. Consolidated Portrait Co., Dept. 12, 1036 W. Adams St., Chicago.

AGENTS! QUICK SALES! BIG PROFITS! Orders in every home for our beautiful dress goods, silks and general yard goods. Large book of samples free to agents. Write today for particulars. National Importing & Mfg. Co., Dept. F 2, 425 Broadway, New York.

TAILORING AGENTS WANTED; LARGEST profits made selling our guaranteed tailoring. We ship free large and complete sample outfit showing over 200 samples. Write today for new 1921 line. Jay Rose Co., Dept. A, 411 S. Wells St., Chicago.

DISTRIBUTORS TO APPOINT AGENTS AND sell Powerene at wholesale. Agents make $30 a day. Special terms to distributors. Equals gasoline at 5c. The equivalent of 20 gallons express prepaid $1. P. Barnes, N424, Santa Rosa, Calif.

AGENTS: WE PAY $6 A DAY TAKING ORders for New Kerogas Burner. Fits any stove. Burns coaloil. No experience or capital required. Work spare time or full time. Write for demonstrating sample. Thomas Mfg. Co., Class 2611, Dayton, Ohio.

SALES AGENTS WANTED IN EVERY county to give all or spare time. Position worth $750 to $1500 yearly. We train the inexperienced. Novelty Cutlery Co., 22 Bar St., Canton, Ohio.

350% PROFIT. QUICK SELLER. KLEAN-Rite Magic Washing Compound. Washes clothes without rubbing. Sells 25c. You make 19c. Samples free. Bestever Products Co., 3253-L, Belle Plaine, Chicago.

AGENTS—A NEW ONE! HARPER'S FIBRE broom and Ten-Use brush set combined. Saves broom expense; lightens housework; easy seller; first order returnable. Harper Brush Works, Dept. B, Fairfield, Iowa.

$11.00 A DAY FOR 5 HOURS WORK. New Method—no capital required—no deliveries—no delays—just take orders and bank big profits. Davis Products Co., Dept. 461, Chicago.

AGENTS—LARGE MANUFACTURER WANTS agents to sell hosiery, underwear, shirts, dresses, skirts, waists, shoes, clothing, etc. Write for free samples. Madison Mills, 503 Broadway, New York.

BIG PROFITS SELLING DUPLEX TRANS-formers. Every auto owner needs them. Save gas. Banish spark plug trouble. Exclusive territory. Write quick. Jubilee Mfg. Co., 320 Sta. C, Omaha, Nebr.

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